Swami Ramanand the Pioneer of Ram Bhakti

(English Rendering of the Hindi Novel)

PAYASPAYEE



Dayakrishna Vijayvargiya 'Vijay'

Swami Ramanand
The Pioneer of Ram Bhakti

(English rendering of the Hindi Novel *Payaspayee*)

by
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Blessings

From His Holiness

Jagadguru Ramanandacharya
Swami Shri Ramnareshacharya

Namostu Ramaya

It is a matter of great pleasure that a literary work on the incarnation of Lord Shree Rama, Ramanandacharyaji's has been brought out after seven hundred and nine years. The contribution made by the revered Swamiji in religious and spiritual fields has been everlasting and permeating in this land. Hence the apathy towards the jewels of the sparkling life and the unparallel work done by him has been greatly discomforting. Dr. Dayakrishna Vijayvargeeya 'Vijay' has however done the breakthrough and dutifully redressed the historical injustice, for which the country will always remain indebted to him. This could not have been possible without the care and kind blessing of the Supreme Lord Rama and the Swamiji.

Earlier a poetic episode in Sanskrit Shree Ramananda Digvijay was published, the credit of which goes to Swami Bhagwadacharyaji, who was venerated by the Universal Guru Ramanadacharya, and was not only confined to the tradition of devotion for Lord Rama, but commanded publications of Sanskrit and Hindi literature on national and international levels. The biography of the revered Acharya in poetic form Shree Acharya Vijay was portrayed

by the renowned and learned authority, Goswami Shree Harikrishna Shastry. The two volumes, Kashi Martand and Shankhanad authored by Ameeta Shah also deserve sincere appreciation. Much before all these volumes, factual information about the life of Swamiji had been presented in Prasanga Parijata.

However, presentation of Payaspayee is extraordinary. Astonishing knowledge, unique expression ability, exhaustive reach to the language, the unique fictional touch have enriched this volume with a touch of deep human values.

Inspired by Payaspayee the society at large will certainly be equipped with the compentency to solve those problems which have been desecrating the sacred land of the Lord Rama. Unfortunately inauspicious clouds of the times of Swamiji are wandering there even today, but the only remedy to dispel them away and bring pure sunshine lies in Swamiji's guidance and by following his ideal doctrines founded on spiritual power.

The novel inspired the Hindi readers in a good number as evidenced by its reviews published in journals and reactions received by us. It was decided that an English translation of this novel should also be published so that it reaches the readers on a global level. Hence we are bringing out this translation by Devarshi Kalanath Shastry of Jaipur.

- Jagadguru Ramanandacharya
Swami Ramanareshacharya
Shri Math, Panchganga
Varanasi

Sept. 3, 2009
Bhadrapada Shukla 13, 2066 V.S.

Prologue

This biographical novel written with Lokanayak Swami Ramanandacharya as the central figure, is the pious fruit of the inspiration from my respectable brother Dr. Uday Pratap Singh (Sarnath, Varanasi). There is a short story behind this inspiration. Dr. Singh had asked me for an article for a souvenir to be published by the Shree Math. While sending an article, I also sent him my earlier published novel 'Ramtarama'. He very much liked the work, and showed it to Shree Math Peethadhishwara Swamy Ramanareshacharya. He too appreciated the novel and sent a message through Dr. Singh that I should write a similar novel on the great saint of Shree Math, Swamy Ramanandacharya. This was divine message for me. I instantly sent my humble consent.

Before commencing my writing on the life of Swamy Ramanandacharya, I urged Swamy Avadhesh Kumarji of Ramadhama Kota to favour me with his guidance for knowing the life of Swamy Ramanandacharya in-depth. He was kind enough to bless me and provided related books from his library. He also assured me of his full co-operation. He even went further to say that he would not only get it printed but also offer it to the people in Kota. Naturally, my enthusiasm bloomed manifold. He suggested me the muhurta also for commencing the sacred task.

The creative writing got a momentum right from the very day he had advised. His divine wishes materalised and the writing was accomplished in a short time. No impediment, no interruption. Though my age could have tired me naturally, this also did not occur. No spooer the creation was ready than I informed Dr. Singh and sent him photocopies. Dr. Singh sent me a letter soaked in hearfelt praises and wrote that the vovel will be printed by the Shreemath itself. He insisted that I should once visit Kashi and meet the Acharya

of Shreemath. It was rainy season and the trains were not running properly, hence I assured him that I would be reaching at the feet of Swamiji in the month of August. Meanwhile Dr. Singh gave a personal reading of the novel before Swamiji and received his blessing as well.

On studying the books brought from Ramadhama, I saw that there was no unanimity on many questions. No uniformity in the incidents, no similarity in the names nor were the dates undisputed. I confronted a difficult situation. Should I mention the name of the revered father of Swami Ramanand as a Kanyakubja Brahmin or Sharma or Vajpayee? Should I write the name of the mother of Ramananda as Murvi or Sushila? Should I write the name of the girl indentified by parents of Swamiji from Shandilya Gotra for marriage with Swamiji, as Madhuri or Salvi. In another incident, whether the Maharani who had come to Swamiji after he was crowned as Peethadheesh of Shreemath, was Sudhaval or Sudhouli. Whether Saint Peepa from Gagron who had traveled with Swami Ramananda along with his wife, had gone directly to Dwarka or he reached Dwarka after his tour to the South. Similarly, whether Swamiji left for the divine abode in Tithi Samwat 1456 or the Rama Nawami of 1515. though these aspects were not of great significance in a novel, they certainly gather moment when the novel is on the life of a famous saint. In such a situation I myself arrived at certain decisions which the reader will find them at respective places. The sequence of incidents in Swamiji's life were also not available in chronological order. By consolidating those incidents, I recorded them at one place from the angle of a novel. This could do justice to the subject and at the same time could harmoniously glorify the virtuousness of the on-going legend. Instead of giving names to the chapters, I have simply titled them by numbers. I am sure the perceptive readers will themselves name the chapters on perceiving the contents.

This volume could have been conflated. The incidents of encroachments by the Muslims, their attacks on the Hindus, the

conversions, oppressions and lust could have been painted at length. Similarly, the rise of the devotional revolution, devotion flowing from south to north and its expanse were the subjects on which page after could have been written. All this could have made the volume thicker but the central sacred figure would have been lost under its impact. Besides, today no one has time to read thick volumes. Seekers of higher knowledge have no time to raise their eyes elsewhere. I have therefore restricted my focus on brevity and the essential elements of fictional value. I had this aim from the beginning and was cautions not to let it go out of my attention.

It is true that Swami Ramanandacharya originally was a monk and a spiritual saint of Vishishthadwaita school of thought. However, I earnestly felt that it would not be justifiable to view his generosity with such restricting features. Without any reservation, Swamiji had employed all his spiritual powers for protection of the country, religion and the society and the integrity of the nation. This freed him from the fact of being a Vishishthadwaita saint and he reached the eminence of social reformer of national dimension. He was an ocean of knowledge, heart of generosity, redeemer of the people. The principles he founded for equality, mutual respect between the sects and for social welfare were extraordinary and stand unparalleled even today. His power to pacify the turbulent situations and introduce deep integrity is a skillful manifestation of his divine power. His revolutionary approach towards unwarranted customs and fanaticism in religious field itself has become history. He exhibited his competency in handling political problems with astonishing yogic endowments. He was the saviour who prevented bloodsheds over high running hatred among the sects and from the coereive religious conversions. His altruistic deeds have illuminated his image as an ambassador of non-violent revolution. Saints have held women as unspiritual obstacles and discarded her, boycotted them, but Swamiji not only gave them initiation but took them to the door of emancipation. It is his segrapathy he accepted woman's glorified existence with all due respect. He broke all the rude constrictions. He had the inherent power to face the attack of fanatics at non-violent level.

He was never seen infuriated. Dissolving all the triviality of caste and creeds, he had respectfully bestowed self-respect to the downtrodeen, and the oppressed sufferers. He had stepped out of his hermitage with a commitment to people's welfare. Spiritual unity and national integrity were the primary objectives of his religious life. The spiritual principles expounded by him in the sacred city of the Lord Ashutosh in Kashi, are not less significant than the Upanishads.

Long deliberations were made while deciding the name of this biographical narrative. Some wanted to have 'Social Reformer National Saint' as a suffix to Swami Ramanand while some wanted to title him as 'Lokanayak' (the Leader). In this context, I would like to appreciate Dr. Uday Pratap Singh who proposed a totally different name to this fictional work which finally came to be 'Payaspayee'. All other names were left out.

Concluding my prologue, I wish to place my gratitude to the Peethadheeshwar Swami Shriramnareshacharyaji, Gagaron Peethadheeshwar Mahamandaleshwar Shri Avadhesh Kumarji and Dr. Uday Pratap Singh who inspired and encouraged me to write the present work and made the way of its publication.

The Payaspayee is now before you. If its study and contemplation orients the society to spirituality, advances the saintly fraternity by following the magnificent life principles of Swami Ramanandacharyaji and generates into national life a feeling of mutuality love and integrity between all the sects, my humble efforts will give me a feeling of great accomplishment. Respects to all.

Shree Ramanandacharya Jayanti
January, 2008

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PREFACE

It is matter of great satisfaction that the biographical Hindi novel entitled **Payaspayee** delineating the life story and the immortal contributions of the holy saint pontiff **Jagadguru Swami Ramanandacharya** (C. 14th Century) who is famous for bringing the stream of Bhakti movement from South India to the Hindi heartland is now available in English, making a global circulation of this holy life account possible. The great torch-bearers of Indian philosophy are well-known throughout the world, Shankaracharya being the foremost who propounded the Advaita philosophy followed by many more who gave the philosophical doctrines the softness of Bhakti cult, first among them being Shri Ramanujacharya (11th Century, 1073-1194 V.S. in Tamilnadu) who propounded the Vishistadvaita cult, then Shri Madhvacharya (13th Century, Karnataka) who propounded the Dvaita cult and Shri Nimbarkacharya (12th Century Maharashtra). The others in this line later were Shri Vallabhacharya (15th Century Andhra Pradesh) and Shri Chaitanya (15th Century, Bengal). The Bhakti movement propounded by these saints with the sublime touch of philosophy and ethics had brought about a virtual renaissance which sustained the social fabric of India in the turbulent Mediaeval times.

All these saints and Acharyas were from the non-Hindi speaking belt who preached mostly in Sanskrit and also in their mother tongues i.e. South Indian languages and Bangla. The only Saint and Jagadguru of the Hindi speaking belt was Ramanandacharya of Kashi and Prayag who is spoken of in the

famous Hindi couplet (Doha) as having brought Bhakti Movement from the south to the Hindi belt and bequeathing it to his disciple Kabir, the immortal poet saint of Benaras who spread the message of the Bhakti to the length and breadth of this land in Hindi and other local dialects of the North and Central India. That is why the following of Jagadguru Ramanandacharya, the chain of temples, Seats, Branches and Priests of his sect (the Ramanand Sampradaya) can be seen pervading through almost each and every city, town and village of north, west and central India over the last seven centuries.

Since the message of the Jagadguru was carried around by his 12 Hindi speaking disciples (called Dwaracharyas) in the mother tongue of the people their preachings entered the very heart of the followers. The history of Ramanand Sampradaya, therefore, is a very interesting and important topic of study for the historians as well as sociologists. The life of Jagadguru Ramanandacharya who emanating from Allahabad journeyed throughout India, had learned Shastraic dialogues with scholars, saints and leaders, preached his cult, simple and moderate, with a message of social equality, without any distinctions of creed or caste, culminating in the scared devotion to Lord Rama who is himself a symbol of flawless conduct, a source of moral inspiration and embodiment of all ideals cherished by the Indian ethos from times immemorial. The advent of Swami Ramanand proved a historic event which changed the stream of history and exhilarated the hearts of the commonest of commons in India bringing the Bhakti stream from the Shastras to the villages and towns of the country and transforming the millions into the followers of Ram and Hanuman, his immortal Bhakta.

There has been a long tradition of writing the life history of such great Acharyas and exponents of philosophical doctrines as Shankaracharya who were founders of immortal universal cults,

therefore called Jagadgurus (Preceptors of the whole world) in Sanskrit epics styled as "Digvijaya", the triumph of all the quarters. Great poets like Madhavacharya had written epics on Shankaracharya like "Shankara Digvijaya". The life and works of Jagadguru Ramanandacharya were also recorded in the form of a Sanskrit epic called Ramananda Digvijaya by a celebrated seer of the Ramanand sect Swami Bhagavadachary. Another account of the life and contributions of Ramananda is available in chaste and profound Sanskrit prose called Acharya Vijaya written by Goswami Hari Krishna Shastri of Jaipur. Such biographical epics, however, were accessible only to the few who knew Sanskrit.

The principal seat of the Ramanand sect is in Varanasi which is called the Shri Math. Varanasi was the centre of learning for centuries in India where Swami Ramanand also stayed for a long time and preached to the follower. Swami Ramanareshacharya who heads the Peetha now is not only a scholar of eminence himself but also a visionary preceptor. He has initiated many philanthropic programmes of social and religious relevance in India. It was his long-chrished desire that the life and contribution of Shri Ramanandacharya should be couched in Hindi and in the form of a novel so that it is available to a common also as a pleasant reading.

Two such works in Hindi entitled **Kashi Martanda** and **Shankhnaad** by Ameeta Shah have been published as would be evident from the benedictory foreword of Shri Ramanareshacharyaji Maharaj. It was a happy turn of events when Dr. Daya Krishna Vijaya, Ex-chairman of Rajasthan Sahitya Academy, a celebrated literary luminary of Rajasthan, a famous poet and scholar of Hindi took up the writing of a biographical novel on the life and works of Swami Ramanandacharya. The title given to it was **Payasapayee** meaning one who enjoys the

milk and distributes it. The austere discipline of not only of vegetarianism but also the use of milk only is a common practice in the Ramanand sect. The title was perhaps symbolic of such principles and practices. The novel describes the life of Swami Ramanand, his religious preachings, learned journeys and dialogues throughout India in a captivating and succinct style and won many ardent readers since is was published in 2008.

As a result, the desire of Swami Ramanareshcharyaji was very natural that if the Hindi novel is made available to the English reading people also through a translation it would have a global reach. The result of this desire is in your hands. This English version of the biographical novel on the holy Saint Swami Ramanandacharya, I hope, would prove a constant source of inspiration to a vast majority of readers. -

- Devarshi Kalanath Shastri
Chairperson - Modern Snaskrit Chair
Jagadguru Ramanandacharya Rajasthan Sanskrit University, Jaipur

Foreword

In modern times fiction novel has been recognized as the best mode of writing in Hindi. All the aspects of life can very nicely be presented in novel. Today prose has taken precedence over Poetry, Story, Novel, Essay, Autobiography, Biography, Memoirs, Reportage etc. have enriched the prose in Hindi. Over all these novel has a specific significance. Today the reader enjoys fiction like poetry.

The novel *Payaspayee's* author Dr. Dayakrishna Vijayvargiya is a well known writer in Hindi literature. For the last sixty years he has been writing prose and poetry.. This novel is on the life of Jagadguru Swami Ramanand. Swami Ramanand was a great "Guru" and a great poet in medieval 'Bhaktikaal' in North India. In that period we see the efforts of Swami Ramanand against atrocities committed by the Muslim rulers on Hindus and the hypocrisy in the name of religion.

This novel is a captivating biography of Swami Ramanand. I hope the readers will be amply benefited by this novel.

- Dr. Udai Pratap Singh
Sarnath (Varanasi)

One

Prayag ! In his house situated at the confluence of the three great rivers Pandit Punya Sadan Sharma is sitting before the Lord Venimadhava in deep trance, sitently chanting the mantra. His little son Ramdatta leaves his mother Sushila Devi and crawling, reaches the worship room, picks up the south threaded conch and blows it. Hearing the sound of conch, Sharma looses his concentration and seeing the child Ramdatta blowing the conch gets astonished. Surprise and perplexity, both find a mixed expression on his face. Surprised was he, for the child had blown the conch which even the stalwarts could not blow it well, and perplexed too, for that south threaded conch was not an ordinary one. Lord Venimadhava, pleased by the devotion and worship of Sharma's wife Sushila, had blessed and gifted her that conch in her hands along with a garland of Prasada*. Since then, Sharma had placed that conch before the idol of Venimadhava in the worship room, and since then he had been worshipping it with proper rituals. Sharma was angry indeed, however when he went ahead to give way to his anger on the child, his hand suddenly came to halt. He called out to his wife. No sooner was she in his sight, than he said angrily 'Take him out of here. Don't you see what he has done? He has desecrated the sacred conch."

'Was it he who blew the conch?'

'Who else?'

'He has become very naughty. Don't know what's there in store of the future?'. Saying this, she picked him up with bitterness. Somehow Sharma completed the rituals of worship, but throughout the day he was vexed with doubts and worries. His mind could not settle in steadiness. After long prayers and worship, fortunate was he to be blessed with a child whose sweet presence had filled the house with joy. How many austerities were observed by Sushila, how many fasts and severe rituals she had undergone. With earnest yearning and invocations she conceived the blissful gift of the child. Has any deity been displeased? He wished he had not invited any wrath. He remained lost in his thoughts unaffected by the talks. Sushila intentionally opened in order to put him at ease. She was

saying, 'After all he is a child, children are embodiments of the gods. Even God does not take their mischiefs seriously. Have you become oversensitive? Oh ! Why this had to happen?' Even at night, Sushila left nothing to keep him in good spirits. Till late night she talked all that would enliven his disposition, but Punya Sadan could not compose himself. With a heavy heart he surrendered to the subconscious state of sleep. In his deep sleep, Lord Venimadhava appeared to him and said - "It is no one but Shree Ram himself who has blown the conch. Now you do not remember, you both were a Brahmin couple at Hrishikesh. At Badrikashrama, you both underwent a severe penance for a son. You had prayed for Sri Rama to take birth in your house in the form of your son. Bearing fruits to your sincere penance in the past life, all pervading omnipresent divine Lord Shri Ram himself has chosen to be with you. At Badrikashrama and as now, You both are also the same Brahmin couple. Let him blow the conch." Lord Venimadhava disappeared and Sharma opened his eyes. His heart was filled with a profusion of bliss. Instantly he woke his wife.

"Sushila, Ramdatta is the incarnation of Lord Rama himself. Lord himself visited my little heart in the dream and disclosed this."

"Really?"

"Am I telling you any lie?" Hearing this blissful revelation, Sushila's love, a mixture of affection and reverence towards Ramdatta foamed from her heart. She embraced sleeping Ramdatta to her chest, turned around and laid her between both of them and, showered himself with kisses on his cheeks. Her eyes were filled with tears of joy. She said, "It is a moment of fulfilment of life, God is very kind". Sharma turned and fell asleep, but Sushila could not sleep throughout the night. With profound pleasure in her eyes, she again and again beheld Ramdatta, kissed him, embraced him, getting lost in ecstatic future thoughts. "I will have all his consecration with Vedic customs. I will get him learn all the knowledge and make him a complete virtuous man..." lost in thinking, her eyes started becoming heavy.

With the touch of golden rays of the eternal energizer, The Sun, the earth woke up with thrilled sensations. Seeing that her husband Punya Sadan had regained his spirit to perform his daily routine; joy glowed on her face, smilingly she said - 'Last night you could sleep, but ....'

'Why? Did you not get sleep then?'

'Thoughts from all directions kept coming to my mind. All the incidents stood before my eyes when the Lord Venimadhava had blessed me with that south - threaded conch alongwith prasada-mala* on my

hands. On the same day I had seen the divine light and felt the sensation of pregnancy. It was a cold day and I was sitting in open space before our house under the warmth of the sun. Suddenly a bright mass of sunlight travelled in my direction. Under the spell of this miracle, my mouth opened and the fireball entered into my womls. All these events are in agreement with the holy revelation that Lord Venimadhava conveyed in your dream. The events were not unwarranted, but were the preparations for reincarnation of the Lord Rama'.

'My beloved, when the Lord takes reincarnation to purify this land, such manifestations are but natural. The holy spirit does not appear alone. His associate powers too emerge on the earth in varied forms. Do you remember that incident at Prayag when certain Muslim fanatics were intense on killing Mansukh for his refusal to accept Muslim religion, and how he secretly ran out into the jungle and saved his life and how in his solitude he threw himself into an ardent penance and invocations to the Lord and achieved blessings for protecting his country fellowmen as well as the great ancient religion. We just cannot envisage which power will appear in what form. It is only later that we realize such amazing divie workings'.

'History will bestow immortality, not only on him but on us too. Didn't the father, mother, brother and sister of Lord Rama have found their place in history for ever?' saying this Sushila kissed Ramdatta who was in her lap with fervent pleasure. It was the moment of the sacred love materializing with Sushila's eyes moist with joy. How thoughtfully the learned pundits at Prayag had named him as Ramdatta. They had told that it was a 'siddhi yoga'* (a period when great elements in the nature come together to sanctify the happening when he was born.)

'Lord Venimadhava himself appeared in the dream to proclaim. What greater 'siddhi yoga' can be higher than this' said Sushila swaying Ramdatta on her waist, kissing him once again; an internal joy gleaming on her face.

'Sushila, birth of such divine souls is also extraordinary. How many Brahmins and sages had already arrived and camped at our door even before his birth. I thought it was a 'Krishna Saptami'* in Magha month; a very auspicious day on which saints come to take bath on confluence of the three sacred rivers here. Do you know, he did not cry when he was born and you started crying, thinking that the child had no life. You made the whole house mourn for a while. Had those saints not been there, who would have brought this child who was in meditation state at the birth itself, to life?

I would have really died had any inauspicious event occurred. Had anyone understood how much a woman suffers for the nine months and what labour pains she has to go through? People feel it's a pretense.' said Sushila emotionally.

'It's not so Sushila, men worry internally whereas pains of women emerge through their tears, visible outwardly.'

'Had he not cried, I would have died of crying myself. What do I know about Samadhi or any such stage? A child must cry when it is born. This is the rule of life.'

'Sushila, and those saints who had arrived were certainly some heavenly beings. They knew what was coming and were waiting for someone to call them. Didn't the child open his eyes when they all came in? What a glow was coming out of his eyes! I was almost blind with the brightness. Sages, while leaving were saying that they had received orders to be present here before he was born.'

'So, were they angels?'

'Sushila, when the supreme power manifests, even the tiniest grass transforms into an assisting element, for the power has to accomplish enormous work. We too have to perform all those rituals which the pundits had prescribed with total devotion. Don't you remember those three things which great Brahmin Varuk had pronounced?'

'Of course! Not to take him out of the house for three years, not to give food but only milk and to save him from evil glare. Isn't it?'

'These are general compliances to be observed. The purpose was that, the child should be healthy and in without any disease. And are you ensuring that he is blowing the conch four times; morning, afternoon, evening and while going to bed, as Lord Venimadhavaa had directed in the dream?'

'Very precisely! His blowing the conch is a heavenly sensation. The sound is so mesmerizing that it sanctifies the whole body and the mind.'

It was an auspicious day of 'Shree Panchami' when Ramdatta entered into his fourth year. The veteran Pundit Varuk had prescribed this day for starting food intake and ear piercing ceremony. Since early morning the house was vibrant with activities. Well before the auspicious moment of Muhurta*, Sushila had spread a layer of cow - dung in front of their house and had decorated it with frills and flowers. On Sushila's directions, the

maid had placed a seat for her. Sushila sat on the sandalwood seat with Ramdatta on her lap and very devotedly performed the worships of the gods and goddesses as per traditional rituals. The maid offered a dish of food and the child extended his hand towards the sweet rice pudding. Slowly, as per his wish Sushila fed him some pudding with spoon. Standing close, Sharma was beholding the ceremony. On feeding the child with spoon, he clapped in welcome of this introduction. Sushila, then fed him also a little of thin pulses soup. The goldsmith had already arrived for ear-piercing ceremony. Sharma had got prepared two small gold ear-rings. He showed them to the child and asked affectionately - 'Want to wear these?'. Child responded, Sharma placed him in his lap near the goldsmith. While he put some water in his mouth, the goldsmith, with swift and gentle action put the ear-ring in his ear-lobe. The child slightly quivered when he held him firm in his arms and the goldsmith put the ring in his another ear-lobe also. He then applied dry turmeric at the pierced spots.

As per the directions given by Pundit Varuk, Sharma started teaching Ramdatta, the scriptures like The Ramayana, The Mahabharata, The Manusmruti etc. He himself was a renowned pundit of Sanskrit in Prayag. Ramdatta was born with such a sharp intellect that he memorized what he heard once. For three years the teaching continued by which time Ramdatta had memorized entire Ramayana. It was Sharma's desire that the talent of Ramdatta should be regarded by the high intellectual society in Prayag and they should give him due recognition. He then invited the scholars who were close to him, to his house and organised a recital of Ramayana by Ramdatta before them. Everyone was astounded and expressed their admiration. Slowly word went around in entire Prayag and veterans and sages started visiting the house to see the divine child. Sharma systematically taught Ramdatta the religious writings - Shrimad Bhagwat*, Manusmruti* along with grammar. Everyone was amazed to see the phenomenal intelligence of the child, and advised as there was no arrangement of such higher studies in Prayag that the child be sent to Kashi where he would get further knowledge of religious philosophy. Gradually Ramdatta also made up his mind and took a firm decision to go to Kashi to master higher knowledge of philosophies. Comprehending the desire of the child, Sharma made arrangements for studies of philosophy at his house. He also felt the need of teaching him Logic and himself started teaching him. He believed that study of Judiciary Science is necessary in order to give just and proper replies with logic to the intricate riddles. Ramdatta was completing his seventh year; time for the sacred

thread ceremony was approaching. Sharma invited great scholar Varuk to decide the auspicious time for the ceremony. He prescribed it on the seventeenth day after his birth date which was Shukla Dwadashi of the month of Magha. He believed that it is very important to perform the traditional sanctifying cultural rituals for the child, in order to make him an ideal citizen with high morals. On the auspicious day, all the preparations were made right from early morning. Barber came and shaved Ramdatta's head and besmeared the head with turmeric paste. A new dhoti was worn by him after the bath. Pundit Varuk performed the thread ceremony keeping him seated on a sandalwood platform. Sanctified with the rituals, the child paid his respects to the seniors present by touching their feet and had their blessings. It was a tradition then that after the thread ceremony, the child is taken out of the town with a sacred staff in his hand, for a small distance on the road leading to Kashi and return home, which was considered to be a symbolic performance of higher studies at Kashi. However the moment Ramdatta was on the road going to Kashi, he refused to come back and was firm on going to Kashi only to complete the higher studies. All tried to pacify him, but he was insistent. Finally, it was then that the parents had to surrender and gave him assurance that they would send him to Kashi, the boy somehow agreed to return home.

It was a testing time for the parents. Ramdatta was just eight years old and he was the only child of his parents. Never had the parents sent him out alone. Worried, they could not sleep throughout the night. Finally on considering several options, they decided to keep the child at the house of his uncle Omkareshwar Tripathi at Kashi. He himself was a pundit in the judiciary at Kashi. They would discuss with him and arrangement would be made for Ramdatta's education under the guidance of some distinguished Guru. They reached the house of Omkareshwar Tripathi along with Ramdatta. Ramdatta did not forget to take the south threaded conch with him. Parents had no objection for this, as it was the commandment of Lord Venimadhava himself in the dream to handover the conch to the child. Omkareshwar Tripathi, the judicial authority had his house near the river of Panchaganga in Kashi. Nearby was the residence of 'Veda Vid Vidvan'* Dandiswamy who, they found to be a knowledgeable teacher and started sending Ramdatta to him his studies. It was there that Ramdatta dedicatedly completed his studies of the Veda and the Vedanga*.



Two

Temple of the Lord Jagannath in Puri on the eastern coast! It was a 'Ratha Yatra Mahotsava' (The ceremony of chariot procession) the idols of Lord Jagannath, elder brother Balram and sister Subhadra were majestically installed on the huge ornamented chariot. Devotees and worshippers, were singing and chanting rejoicingly in praise of the Lord and pulling the mammoth chariot to take it to a place named Gundicha, where the Lord takes a sojourn for fifteen days. Entire atmosphere was filled with devotion and jubilation. Suddenly the chariot came to a halt, not yielding to the strenuous pulling of the devotees who were all bathed in sweat. An air of frustration stole over the strange occurrence. Enthusiasm was getting receded. The long shouts had become silent. The situation was extremely tense, when an enlightened saint named Haryanand came forward from the crowd and said - 'Let everybody be away from the chariot, Lord's chariot will move on its own.' Surprised at this statement of Swami Haryanand the crowd of disciples and worshippers were startled as it was impossible to apprehend that the mammoth structure of the chariot will move on its own. All the eyes were fixed on the distinguished saint. Some thought of him as a highly enlightened yogi, and for some he appeared to be the Lord Jagannath Swami himself. Devotees standing far away rushed through the crowd towards the chariot to witness this historic occurrence. People did not recede despite the guards were trying to move them away. Some of them came forward and stood right in front of the chariot. There is a tradition that the ruler of the kingdom performs the worship rituals before the chariot sets off on the journey. The sudden stopping of the chariot brought the king to a feeling of guilt and he started introspecting as to what was the flaw in his worship that the holy chariot of the Lord suddenly came to a halt. The Lord had embarked upon his journey towards his matermal aunt's house (as the story goes), everything had started in delightful festivity. Why then this time the strange occurrence took place, which has never happened in the past? The crowd was anxious to see the miracle of yogic power of the sage. After a breathtaking silence, the chariot started moving on its own. Spell-bound, the crowd started hailing Swami

Haryanand and the air was filled with reverberant shouting praises for the Swami. Some oversensitive people rushed to touch the feet of Swami Haryanand. A wondrous miracle had occurred, it was an unbelievable sight of yogic power. The organizers of the temple folded their hands before the sage to offer their immense gratefulness. Varied talks were murmured in the crowd. The Lord himself had appeared in the form of Swami Haryanand. Some said, the Lord has designed this illusionary phenomena to propagate the spiritual power of Haryananda. The Swami was not well-known to the people of Puri, hence the stories and rumours were spread farward wide in varied forms.

Swami Haryanand was a disciple of the great yogi of Kashi, Shri Shriyanandacharya. His Shrimath hermitage was on the bank of the river Panchangnga. Haryananda, during his stay as a disciple in the hermitage of his Guru Shri Shriyanandacharya, used to be in deep meditation perpetual trance with everlasting bliss of Shri Hari. Beholding his faith and yogic status, his Guru Shri Shriyananda started calling him as Haryananda. His physical stature too was strong, attractive and rich with divine splendour. Pleased with his service and yogic ability to remain in Samadhi, Swami Shri Shriyanandacharya proclaimed him as the successor of his hermitage, and left for the south.

Hearing about Swami Haryananda, Shri Raghavanandacharya who was a southern Brahmin and a renown scholar of 'Nigamagama'* came to Kashi to be his disciple. Swami Haryananda saw Shri Raghav, and at the first sight accepted him as his disciple; gave him 'mantra diksha'* with five sanctified cultures (panca sanskara) and named him Raghavananda. Swami Raghavananda took over as the preceptor of Shrimath after Swami Haryananda, and in order to make his mark on the intellectual society of Kashi, performed a yogic miracle. He had received invitations to deliver discourses from three different places at the same time. He accepted all the three invitations and delivered religious discourses, appearing physically at all the three places by his yogic power. Next day it was a matter of talk in Kashi. Not only the intellectual society but the commoners too held him in high esteem as a saint possessing miraculous power. Devotees started thronging to Shrimath.

Ramdatta was taking his lessons in different disciplines of knowledge from Dandi Swami, and was staying with Shri. Omkareshwar Tripathi. Residence of Dandiswamy was just near the bank of the river Panchaganga. Impressed by the increasing reputation of Swami

Raghavananda, a desire to see him in person rose in the mind of the young Ramdatta. At a proper free time and with permission from Guru Dandi Swami, he started going to the hermitage to listen to the discourses. Swami Raghavananda too was intensely impressed with Ramdatta's knowledge of scriptures, his intellect and determination. Ramdatta, fascinated by the discourses of Swamiji started sparing more and more time in the hermitage. Studies at Dandi Swami were almost over when once Ramdatta stopped after the discourse touched Swami Raghavananda's feet and prayed for accepting him as his disciple. Swami Raghavananda, who was already impressed by his extraordinary abilities, he put his hand on Ramdatta's head and said, 'You have completed the ritualistic and analytical life in this material world. Now onwards it will be your new spiritual life. Your new name will be Ramananda'.

Obtaining permission from Omkareshwar Tripathi, Ramananda started staying at Guru Raghavananda's Shrimath. Tripathi informed about this to Sharma at Prayag, who sunk into deep anguish the moment they received the news. They were immensely disheartened as they could not decide what reply they would give to Shri. Shandilya with whose daughter Salvi, they had fixed Ramdatta's marriage. And Sushila had been so contented with beauty and virtues of Salvi, that she often was dreaming about the pleasurable life she would have as her mother-in-law. Pundit Shandilya, who received this news, also was distressed. Shandilya didn't want to lose such a bridegroom for their daughter. They had already visualized and accepted Ramdatta as their son-in-law and never found themselves tired of praising his knowledge and intellect, in the neighbourhood. It was like lightning striking them. Jolted, they couldn't wait for a moment and rushed to Sharma's residence. Both the families discussed for hours, not knowing what to do. Ramdatta was no more a child. He was a youngman with admirable knowledge of the sciences. He was a pundit himself. Then the father's mind started thinking - someone must have misguided him or else he certainly would not disobey me. He said to Shri. Shandilya, 'Let me go there once. I will certainly keep my promise given to you'. Sushila too assured the wife of Shandilya in a similar way. Shandilyas were insisting that they too would accompany Sharmas to Kashi along with Salvi. May be that seeing Salvi once, young Ramdatta will change his mind. Sharma tried to stop Shandilya but it was of no avail. Sharma himself was an intellectual. Throughout the night he was thinking about how he could convince Ramdatta. Then he thought, the pundit can be defeated by a pundit only. A book on 'Mimansa' (one of

the six schools of Hindu philosophy) written by renowned philosophical analyst in Prayag, Kumaril Bhatt still had its deep bearing in the minds of people. He took out the book from his library and kept it with him. In clear terms Kumaril Bhatt had stated that every person must accept marital life once in his lifetime. 'If I show this to Ramdatta, he will certainly think over it', thought Sharma. Next day all five of them left for Kashi.

Omkareshwar Tripathi was waiting at Kashi and was delighted to see them. He was greatly impressed by Salvi at the first sight when they introduced her to him. He too thought of Salvi as the ideal bride for Ramdatta. Till late in the night they all were discussing. Pundit Shandilya said, 'When Ramdatta has accepted a formal Diksha* and has become disciple of Swami Raghavananda of Shrimath, the chance of his returning back appears to be very remote.' Sharma said, 'Let us go once and meet him, he would not disobey me.' However, Omkareshwar Trimpathi cut the discussion and said, 'We don't mind going and meeting him, but I don't think that he would listen to any one of us and return back home.' Salvi, sitting at a little distance away was listening to the discussions. All her dreams of marriage had broken to pieces. She was lost in deep sadness. Late at night, tired of thinking any more she fell asleep. In her dream she saw a saintly person telling her, 'Soon after you marry, you will be widowed'. Hearing this, her eyes opened. A heavy pain shot her head. Shocked, she could not know what to do. The whole night she was in deep distress. Thoughts from all directions were maddening her. Finally she decided that she would not become the cause of someone's death and live her entire life as a spinster.

All the three families, with Salvi reached Shrimath of Swami Raghavananda. Seeing them, Ramananda came running, touched elders' feet and respectfully lead them inside the hermitage. Salvi was standing behind. Ramananda did not even looked at her. Salvi had kept looking at him with her wide eyes. The moment he turned, she sank into sadness and was possessed with a new anxiety. She was deeply caught into an intricate dilemma of being a widow and of causing no harm to the captivating youthful figure of Ramdatta. At one moment she thought, 'Do the dreams materialize?' At another moment she thought, what right had she to be the cause of this young person's death? Wasn't it wise to remain a spinster lifelong? Her mind was in turmoil. Her thoughts could not settle on anything and she started composing herself to return home.

At an appropriate moment, Ramananda introduced all of them to Swami Raghavanandacharya. With clean shaven head, Shri Raghavananda was seated on a high wooden seat with his straight back. A tilak was shining on his yoga - lit forehead. His body was covered with a white cloth. Another cloth was wrapped from waist to the knee. One by one, they touched his feet and took their seats on the floor in front of the wooden seat. Ramananda stood by the left side of the seat. Swami Raghavanand turned to Ramananda and asked -

'Who are they?'

'This (pointing towards Punya Sadan) is my father, who has come from Prayag. This (pointing towards Omkareshwar Tripathi) is my uncle and stays in Kashi.'

'Do you stay in Kashi, where?'

'On the bank of river Panchaganga, a little distance away.'

'What is the objective of your visit?'

'That girl over there was betrothed to Ramdatta and her marriage has been fixed with him. He (pointing towards Shri. Shandilya) is the father of this girl and we have come to take your permission for this marital tie.'

'You may ask this to the girl herself. The material life span which Ramananda had brought with him, is over. It is his new spiritual life. (Pointing towards Punya Sadan) This son of is yours God himself. He is born to pull the nation from adversities and to protect ancient culture. I see in him a visionary in whose hands the future of this country, religion and society is safe. The eternal peace of life is anxiously waiting to select him.'

'Swami, this Punya Sadan has already given his promise to Shandilyaji' (interrupted Omkareshwar Tripathi).

'Didn't you both (pointing out to Punya Sadan and his wife) asked for him from Lord Venugopal? What did the Lord Venugopal tell you then?' The moment Punya Sadan heard this, he got up and clasped Swamiji's feet. He said, 'You are the perceiver of past, present and future. Nothing can remain hidden from you. I am merely a father having some sentiments of my own.'

'All this is a material illusion which has kept you attached. Ramdatta's way is pre-determined. Our existence is merely for namesake and we too

have to fulfill our duty of complying to our so called existence with impassive mind.' Saying this Swami Raghavananda placed his palm on Punya Sadan's head and all the illusion kept flushing out from within him.

'You have opened my eyes. (Turning towards Shandilya) Please forgive me; I shall not be able to keep my promise.' Hearing this statement of Punya Sadan, Shandilya and Omkareshwar remained speechless. (Touching the feet of Shri Raghavananda) 'Under the burden of the indebtedness for enlightening, I am experiencing my inner self. Now nothing attracts me except rendering my service to you.'

'Please do come and pay your visits here often. Keep the same affection towards him, but know for yourself that he is none other than Venimadhava himself.' Hearing these compliments, hearts of all present there were filled with ecstasy joy. A spiritual consciousness arose in their hearts and all were gazing at him with indescribable awe. All bowed and paid respect at the feet of Swami Raghavananda and took his permission to leave. Flood of tears made Swami Raghavananda's feet wet. The moment Swami Raghavananda held his palm on her head, all the attachments and illusions instantly took to wings and flew away. Salvi made a firm determination in her mind that she would remain a spinster for her lifetime and never be hindrance in the committed path of Ramananda. Pundit Shandilya was tossed with mixed emotions; all his hopes were shattered. With a heavy mind, they all reached the residence of Omkareshwar Tripathi, when Shandilya said, 'Take this book, keep it.'

'What is this?' asked Omkareshwara.'This is an analytical book written by Kumaril Bhatt of Prayag. Punya Sadan had brought it along. He was saying he would show it to Ramdatta.' said Shandilya.

'What does it say?' asked Omkareshwara.

'Haven't you read this?' asked Shandilya.

'No.'

'It says, man must accept marital life once before taking sanyasa*

'Of course this is true. If one does not perform marital duties, how will this culture flourish? Isn't this worldly life the creation of the Almighty? Isn't it His conception?' Instantly Punya Sadan said - 'I am grateful that everything has become clear now. Had he gone stealthily like Gautam Buddha, Salvi would have suffered miseries throughout her life.' Silence

prevailed for some time. An inner protest in the mind of Shandilya was trying to surge up, but he did not speak. Omkareshwar broke the silence and said-

'Since ancient times the lifestyles, morality and Vedic, both have been time-honoured in India. When the marital life is necessary for perpetual growth of the creation, appearance of enlightened personalities is also essential for imparting guidance to the commoners' in society. The freed spiritual souls appear here from time to time to show the path to the society and lead people to a moral way of life. They are the ones who protect the nation and the religion.'

'Rightly stated. He is the supreme soul who pre-determines the path of each one of us. No creation is meaningless' intercepted Punya Sadan Sharma.

'Marital life is the main theme of the world. Rare are they who renounce the ties of emotions and march on the divine way of salvation. However all cannot sacrifice and renounce.' said Pundit Shandilya. They remained silent for some time. No one was supporting renunciation nor was any one supporting householder's life. They had their own opinions.

After resting at night, they were leaving for Prayag. Pundit Omkareshwar told Punya Sadan - 'Take care of Sushila. Mother is an ocean of love. Her heart is very fragile. See that it doesn't break.'

'I am worried too. Swami had his hand on my head, all attachments have started loosening.'

'Swamiji has showered abundant praises on Ramdatta. How fortunate you are that such a divine soul was born as your son and played in your house. How vibrant was the foreground of your house which his laughters and cries filled.' said Pundit Shandilya sarcastically while leaving the house of Tripathi. Punya Sadan Sharma could sense the sarcasm, but kept quite. Adding another sarcastic remark Shandilya said, 'I am sure you have not forgotten the book of Kumaril Bhatt.'

Swami Raghavananda had given Ramananda a formal Diksha of their 'Vishishtadwaiti' sect and accepted him as his disciple. He explained to him the rituals of 'Pranayama' and of entering into and returning from 'samadhi*' state. He told him to continue perpetual 'sadhana*'. Young Ramananda used to be immersed in yogic tranquility and blissful state with Lord Rama. Swami Raghavananda was greatly satisfied with his

intellect and command over sciences. He had also witnessed his resolute renunciation on that day. He was highly contented to see the way heavenly aura was encircling him. Totally assured, he had granted all his spiritual achievements and yogic powers to Ramananda. Ramananda was transformed into a complete self-realised saint with all the yogic powers in him. Guru Raghavananda was confident that he would thereafter protect the country, religion and society and guide them towards the virtuous moral way; that he would propagate the significance of faith in protecting the country and preserving the ancient religion. One day Swamiji, in the presence of all devotees performed the ritual in accordance with the tradition of 'Vishishtadwaiti' Sect and declared Ramananda as his successor, the future preceptor of the hermitage. He then set for a journey towards the south.

Before departing, Swami Raghavananda had organised a 'Vrihad Ram Yajna' wherein 600 'ahutis*' of 'Shad Akshar Mantraraj' were made. Thirty three pundits - all scholars of the Vedas were invited to perform, amongst them were the stalwarts like Shri. Tatya Shastri - known for his strong religious conviction, Shri. Karmathji - a pundit, highly skilled in performance of rituals and services, Shri Chaturvedi - a young student intellectual and Shri Dharmaraj - a venerable saint. Apart from these thirty three honoured authorities, there were many other renowned pundits of Kashi. The sacrificial altar was spread in vast area. Fragrant offerings were proffered in the altar, entire Kashi was reverberated with the invocations of the six lettered Mantra. It was a talk in every lane of Kashi. People from all nook and corner were thronging to see the yajna. Guru Raghavananda and the disciple Ramananda were seated on a high decorated seat and all the citizens felt themselves fortunate to receive their blessings.

Prior to this, Swami Ramananda used to be deeply engrossed in studies prescribed by his Guru in a newly constructed shelter hut on the bank of the Panchaganga to review the full gamut of disciplines of ancient sciences. Enriched with the wealth of knowledge and enlightenment, he was answering all the doubts and queries raised by senior yogis, saints, sages, intellectuals and students coming from distant places. They were happy to receive the definitive answers for their spiritual uncertainties. Swami Ramananda's blowing of the celestial conch mesmerized the people. Spellbound, the people were rushing towards the site of sacrificial altar to experience the spiritual spell. The immates of the Shrimath too were witnessing this unique ceremony.

On Ekadashi of the month of Chaitra, the great Yajna was concluded. Plentiful offerings and showerings were made. Praises for organising such a huge Yajna were pouring in for Swami Raghavananda from all directions, and he was honoured as a living legend of spiritual illumination.

The expansive pavilion was crammed with people. Gurudev declared his departure from the hermitage and announced his disciple Ramananda as his successor.

Hearing the news of Gurudev's departure, the present pundits, intellectuals, religious people became sad and anxious. They got up one by one and touching Guru Raghavananda's feet, took his blessings.

When all requested Gurudev to remain there for some more time, he answered them that his disciple was a divine presence who had reincarnated to protect the country, cows, brahmins*, mothers and sisters and he would rescue them from injustice and oppressions caused by dubious religions. He assured them that the future of the country was safe in the hands of Ramananda; social welfare, peace would prevail abundantly and sacred tide of worshipping Lord Rama would reach every household.

The disciple Ramananda got up and bowed his head at the feet of his Guru Raghavananda. The air was filled with joyous shoutings of salutations for them.



Three

Ramananda had now become Swami Ramanandaacharya. He left the hut near Panchaganga and came to Shrimath hermitage. He selected one of the cavern like rooms in the hermitage, put a curtain in front and started living in seclusion. Early at the dawn he would go to the bank of the Ganga, and after routine rituals would enclose himself by the divine sadhana of Vaishishthadwaiti Ram Nam. Swami Ramananda was regularly giving discourses. All the laid down routine rituals were continuing with reverberating echoes of his conch four times in a day. Apart from this, he would blow it whenever he would come out of the cave or when he would desire to bestow special spiritual favours on persons. Sound of this celestial conch was no less than a miracle for the people of Kashi. They would come from distances to hear the miraculous reverberations of the conch. Apart from its magnetic power, once the people also witnessed a power of granting life in the mysterious conch. Once a dead body was being carried to the Ganga for final rituals by the road down the hermitage, when coincidentally lively sound of the conch was being sent in the air by Swamiji. Listening to its reverberating magnetic sound waves, suddenly the dead person arose gaining life again. Spell of Swamiji's divine power was a matter of talk in the vicinity of Kashi and around. Crowds started gathering for 'satsang*' (a pious interaction with the learned). After satsang people with different problems and there on the threshold of death's gate would anxiously wait to listen to the sound of the sacred conch. With a broad foresight and love for humanity, the Swami had opened the gates of hermitage for people of all castes and creeds. There was no bar of gender or the untouchables. He had removed the rift between the human beings; all were one. Women would have more faith in the sound of the conch than medicines. All satsangs were attended by great gatherings.

Swami Ramananda's fame broke the barriers of geographical boundaries of Kashi. Hearing of his greatness, once the queen of Sudhaval brought her son, who was suffering from a serious ailment, at the feet of the Swami. Swami gave her due regards, heard her story and of the sufferings. The queen said, 'This is the only son of my seven ones who is

alive. Now he too is suffering from ailment. I am miserable. Everyone in the royal family is sad. He is the only hope of my kingdom. Please bless him, bless the kingdom and save the dignity of my daughter-in-law. Hearing the episode, Swami Ramananda's heart was filled with compassion. He said, - 'The prince will get well; however you will have to do what I say.' The queen wiped her tears and said, 'Your directions will be carried out meticulously.' Swamiji said, 'Throw him into the Ganga and on the seventh day pay her to give him back to you, She will cure him and she herself bestow him to you.' It was a terrible and stern order. The queen remained speechless and did not know what to say. Then the voices rose from the crowd, 'The queen will obey the Swamiji. Keep faith, the prince will be alright. She will not worry.' The devout people lent their strength to the queen. She bowed before Swamiji, took the prince to the bank of The Ganga. There the prince himself jumped into Ganga. Waiting for quite some time the prince did not emerge from the water when the devout people who were witnessing the incident said, 'queen will not worry. Swamiji has taken him under his shelter, she should come back on the seventh day. Had the prince not been taken under the blissful shelter of Swamiji, wouldn't he once emerge from the water? The queen somehow composed herself and returned. The crowd gathered to witness this incident gradually receded. On the seventh day, the queen came to the bank of the Ganga and the moment she asked Mother Ganga to grant her son back, the prince appeared there with a pleasant smile. There was no trace of any ailment on his body. The bank of the river became vibrant with the shouts of praise 'Ganga is glorious', 'Swami Ramananda is divine'. The queen, along with the prince performed the worship of Swamiji with ceremonious rituals and announced that she would build a new hall in the hermitage. Within no time the news spread in and around Kashi.

One day a young person named Channu came to the hermitage hearing the magnetic sound of the conch. Instantly he fell on the feet of the Swami and said, 'I am enchanted by the conch. That time I was in the temple of Vishwanatha. After spending a sleepless night there, I have straight rushed here. I wish to stay here and feel like listening to the sound of conch day and night. Please give me place at your feet.'

'Who are you? Where have you come from? Whose son are you?'

'My name is Channu. I am the son of Pundit Vishwanath Mani Tripathi of Maheshpur and now staying in Kashi.'

'With whom are you staying here?'

'With Pundit Shyamkishoreji. He is no more in this world now.'

'You mean there is no one?'

'All others are there, but after listening to the sound of the conch, I do not feel like staying there. Now I wish to remain in your service.'

'What will you do here?'

'I will do anything that you will tell me to do.'

(after a long thought) 'Alright, stay here.'

Channu started cleaning and sweeping the hermitage. Rest of the time he would sit outside the cave and serve Swamiji. At the sound of conch he would leave everything and rejoice, dance under its spell. For a year, with full devotion he served the hermitage and Swamiji and won his heart. Swamiji was kind. He thought, this is a brahmin boy and also talented. Why shouldn't he be given proper mantra Diksha and be accepted as a disciple? Nothing was hidden from the spiritual vision of the Swamiji. Channu's entire life was before his eyes. He gave him Diksha with five sanctifying rituals and accepted him as his disciple. He named him Anantananda. Channu was the first disciple of the Swami. Now Anantananda did not remain a boy cleaning and sweeping the hermitage, but an authoritative disciple. All the responsibilities of hermitage were entrusted to him. Welcoming and offering hospitality to the visitors, arranging their meets with Swamiji was being done by him with due care and rules. Gradually, he came to be recognized as the personal assistant of Swamiji.

On opening the gates of hermitage for all, irrespective of caste, creed and religion, Julaha Kabir of Kashi also entertained the idea of becoming his disciple. He started attending the satsanga everyday. Listening to the talks on humanity, above religions and castes, and the thought of becoming a disciple obsessed him. He even conveyed his desire through the disciple Anantananda. However there was no response from Swamiji. Kabir thought, Swamiji goes to the banks of Panchaganga at the dawn for bath. What would be better than hiding there in the dark on the stairs before he goes there and touching his feet? What effect would be better than this? Resolutely, he did so. As Swamiji stepped on him in the dark, asked -

'Who is it?'

'I am Kabir.'

'Ram Ram Ram', saying this Ramananda took the other side and descended the stairs. Happily and rejoicing Kabir returned home. He put a Ramanandai tilak on his forehead, wore Tulsi garland in the neck and a cloth with Ram's names painted, and came to the market. Looking at him, everyone was surprised and asked - 'What is this Kabir?'

'I have become a formal disciple of Ramananda' Gradually this incident reached the hermitage too. When Kabir arrived reached there for satsanga, Anantananda took him to meet Swami Ramananda. From behind the curtain Swamiji asked -

'Kabir, when did I make you my disciple, When did I give you mantra Diksha?'

'Swamiji, on the stairs of the bank of Ganga, you blessed me by touch of your feet and uttered the mantra of 'Ram' 'Ram' to give me Diksha. From that day onwards I am wearing this attire. Day and night, with breath in and breath out I am chanting 'Ram Ram'.

Hearing this, Ramananda was very pleased. Satisfied with such a loyalty, he came out of the curtain and embraced him. He said, 'You are the Ekalavya* of the present time. You have taken my discipleship stubbornly on your own. You have great loyalty towards the name of Lord Rama which is true worship. Keep coming for satsanga and keep chanting the name of Lord Rama.'

Kabir bowed and placed his head on Swami Ramananda's feet, 'This body has now been handed over to you.' Swami Ramananda's heart was filled with divine kindness. He asked Anantananda to give him formal Diksha by giving him traditional tilak, kunthi, cloth, kamandal and mantras. Kabir was the first householder disciple who received Diksha mantras. Since then Kabir constantly remained engrossed in the sadhana of Rama's name with great devotion. Like Anantananda, Kabir too ascended on the fourth stage of illumination and earned enlightenment. Julaha Kabir became Saint Kabir.

Swami Ramananda's daily discourses were on the doctrines to consider all the living beings with equality, non-violence, and surrendering the ego etc. and made a deep impression in the minds of people in Kashi.

They were already fascinated by the conch sound. The incident of Julahe Kabir being disciple of Swami Ramananda made a strong impact on the minds of fanatics and extremists. They started thinking that Swami Ramananda was not an ordinary person, but a physical manifestation of the Supreme Lord under whose spell incidents of conversions, rapes ad remarkably reduced. This boosted a significant admiration for the enlightened sage in India. Another incident that occurred around the same time also strengthened this feeling.

The Shankaracharya of the famous Shringeri Math Shri. Bharati Tirth, during his religious tour of India had come to Kashi for having a darshana of Lord Vishwanath. He was accompanied by his younger brother Madhavacharya. Entire Kashi had laid red carpet to welcome them. During the tour in the town, women worshipped them with lamps and offerings. The merchants were thronging to offer garlands and touch his feet. Flowers were showered in Kashi Market. It was like a historical incident in the city. Shrimath also was keeping all the information about their arrival and Shri Bharati Tirtha too was eager to see Swami Ramananda. He had heard about several miraculous performances that the Swami had given. However, he was hesitating to visit Shrimath with the thought that the world was coming to his feet and whether it would be appropriate for him to visit Shrimath on his own to see Swami Ramananda in broad daylight. However, he could not resist his desire to see Ramananda. After the evening prayer, he quietly took along his brother Madhava and a devotee, without informing anyone left for Shrimath. Gates of the hermitage was closed. Swami Ramananda was in deep meditation. The aura radiating from his body was illuminating the entire hermitage. As he reached the gate Bharati Tirth felt miraculous spiritual vibrations within him. The devotee who was accompanying him knocked at the gate. The chief disciple Anantananda himself opened the gate. Seeing the respectable celebrities at the gate, he paid them respects and welcomed them in. He offered them seats in front of the cave. At the same time a bell rang inside followed by the echoing sound of the conch, the reverberating waves of which sent Bharati Tirth into yogic trance. He sank in to eternal bliss. As the curtain was removed by Anantananda, Bharati Tirth found himself composing and in a mesmerized state he got up and bowed before the feet of Swami Ramananda. Stopping him by both the hands Swami Ramananda said - 'You must not abandon the bearing of Jagatguru, the preceptor of universe. Keep the prestige of that status.'

'I have received the ultimate fruits of renunciation by your rare sight'

'It's a cottage of hermits. I could not get prior intimation and could not make proper arrangements for your reception.

'Your sight is the greatest reception. I had the desire to come to Kashi to bow before Lord Vishwanath which is fulfilled. I heard about you and had an irresistible desire to see you. You are the greatest amongst the hermits. You are majestic. I wish you place your hand on the head of my brother Madhav and bless him so that he would attain the virtues of a saint and serve the people.'

'Respectable Sir, you are learned. True loyalty of the hermit is prove when he denies even the pride of his work. Fruits of the work do not come when pride of performance exists and pride of work leaves only when the mind rests with the soul.'

'This is all possible with your blessings. Please impart the knowledge of soul to him if you wish. Please show him the secret of the universe. There is no one equal to you in this world. Please therefore grant us the favour of the magnanimity of your heart.'

Bharati Tirth humbly said so, and signalled to Madhava, who bowed before Swami Ramananda. Swami Ramananda placed his hand over his head, blessed him and blew the conch, the sound of which brought all the spiritual powers to fill the surroundings. Swami Ramananda told the Shankaracharya, that Madhava is now enlightened. He has perceived the knowledge of his earlier life and culture. He is now a sage and needs to follow ardent sadhana of Lord Rama in solitude. Swami Ramananda again reverberated the conch and Madhav went into a trance. Looking at his state the Shankaracharya was moved, and joining his hands he said, 'I am gratified.' On coming out of the samadhi, Madhava again bowed before him. Getting up from his seat, the Shankaracharya said, permit us to leave. We have given you enough trouble.' Swami Ramananda went to see them off at the gate. While taking leave to go Bharati Tirth said, 'This is why I came alone. After seeing you now there is no trace of fear in my mind to say that you are the divinity itself, Lord Rama himself !

The news that the Shankaracharya Shri Bharati Tirth secretly went to see Swami Ramananda spread swiftly in entire Kashi. This meeting enhanced peoples' faith in Ramananda. The satsangas were so crowded

that there was no place to keep even a foot. Swami Ramananda had already throw open the gates of the hermitage for all castes and creeds. Hence even those devotees started coming for the satsanga, who were earlier expelled by the people of Kashi treating them untouchables. By opening the doors to all, Swamiji granted human dignity to the poor and those of the weaker communities. In the crowd there was one devotee named Raidas who was a cobbler. According to his status, he preferred to sit aloof close to a distant wall. Swamiji, as usual was giving his sermon with an advice to remove discrimination from the heart and to serve those who were weaker and depressed in the society. Swamiji said, 'The same supreme power dwells in the souls of every human being and one must behold the others with the same respect. Devotion to the Supreme Lord Ram is the way to get liberation. Surrendering to Lord Ram who is the ultimate power is the the true devotion. Judiciousness, detachment, study, rituals, and welfare of the people are the steps towards it. Compliance of these doctrines of devotion, helps one to attain liberation. The aim must be to continuously remember the name of Lord Ram while breathing in and out. True mark of devotion towards God is to keep a tuft on the head, tilak on forehead, a garland in neck, the garland of tulasi* in hand and to set on to the welfare of the humanity with immense love towards the ultimate God Ram. With this sermon of Swamiji, the dormant thoughts of sacred culture in Raidas' mind came to the fore. He started coming for the sermons every day and offering his service to the hermitage. He earned the special affection of Anantananda. Once he opened his heart with Anantananda and said - "I too wish to take a diksha mantra from Swamiji and become a disciple'. Anantananda assured him with simple words, 'Let us see, keep coming and try to renounce the householders life."

Once at an opportune time Anantananda said to Swamiji, "This time rampant oppressions are being carried out on Hindu society by the anti-religious elements, forcible conversions are taking place, women are not safe and they must be protected. Hindu society is divided in different castes and is deeply trapped in the vicious circle of higher and lower classes. This is the time when the Hindu society must unite and create an atmosphere of reciprocal care. The present calamity can be fought only if the Hindu society is organised. If Swamiji will be kind enough to grant mantra diksha with 'panca sanskar'* to the devotee Raidas, it will create an atmosphere of equality and bring them at par with the other classes of the society. This will prevent conversions too. As a consequence of granting diksha to Kabirdas the anti-religious elements have stopped their evil

attacks to a great extent and conversions have come down." On this, Swamiji said -

"Anantananda, no one can destroy the treasure of spiritual knowledge in this country. You will see, a day will come when all the world will come running to India for spiritual knowledge and their materialist mind will receive the solace in this soil only. The liberated souls are witnessing everything. They will certainly rejuvenate the ancient spiritual culture of this country and will grant favour to the society which is tortured by evils. A flood of devotion will flow incessantly in which the oppressed, the anti-religious, everyone will be seen flowing to get a divine bath of ultimate love. Is Raidas desirous of taking diksha mantra?"

"Yes, Gurudev, he has expressed his desire. In this age, the weaker community who are devoid of ego is eligible for sainthood. The upper classes have deprived themselves of the sanctity of diksha, but it will be this hermitage that will grant them affection. The simple path to gain liberation, the way in the midst of debate of 'saguna - nirguna'* is Shabda Suruti Yog* in the form of sacred chanting the name of Lord Ram. This will bring together the society which is now divided between various deities, fanatical bands and their respective clans. This is the middle way between saguna and nirguna. All those who follow glorify and all those fanatics who embrace their clans, desire liberation. And this sadhana only is the simplest way of attaining salvation. Today it is you in the world who is showering the liberation to the people with unhesitating generosity.

"Anantananda, you have spoken the truth. Inform Raidas."

Next day after the satsang Raidas came near Anantananda and stood there with a gleaming hope in his eyes. Anantananda told him - "Wait. Let the devotees depart.' Raidas stood at some distance. After some time Anantananda signaled him to come near. Raidas prostrated before Swamiji and joining his palms stood before him respectfully. Swamiji said, "Keep coming, keep chanting the name of Lord Ram, he himself will call you." Soon Raidas too received diksha and became the second householder saint. With tulasi garland around the neck, tilak on forehead, clad in a shawl with names of Ram inscribed on it and with tonsured head he was seen in Kashi.

The Brahmin society had earlier raised strong protest when Kabir was given diksha. The stir had not yet subsided when the news of Raidas getting initiated broke out and drew strong criticism. Hearing the criticism,

Swami Ramananda in his next satsang said, 'People call themselves brahmins but not for a moment they are anywhere near brahma*. They have forgotten the divine aim of the life. They are ignorant and are living a narrow life confined and contented with having been born in their higher caste. Man is inferior or superior by his deeds. How can anyone who does not even take the name of the God become superior? Pride of having material wealth is simply a vanity. It is like embracing mortality. True spirit, true knowledge and true devotion lie in knowing the immortal powerful soul within us who controls everything. How can his devotee then be poor or inferior? Happy is he who is contented. Contentment is the greatest treasure. The country has been weakened only by those who are living with a false secure of superiority. They speak of advaita but in fact are living the way of dvaita. They talk about renouncing but are completely sunken in their petty desires. This weakness only has invited the anti-religious elements to dominate. The greatest need of the hour is reciprocal love, integrity and soulful sight'. Swamiji's eloquent reply to the criticism of the brahmins of Kashi, braced up new disciple Raidas, his joy knew no bounds.

Campaign of equality which discarded the vanity of untouchability, free and unhesitating granting of diksha and a the simple middle way of Shabda Surati Yog between dvaita and advaita, in the form of chanting of 'Rama Nama' became subjects of discussions not only in Kashi but in distant religious places. Large number of people aspiring for knowledge and liberation were seen on the way to see Swamiji. Swami Ramananda, in order to lessen his own burden of the ever - increasing responsibility, had started equipping his first disciple with divine powers. He took him to the fourth step of sadhana where he could behold the celestial existence of the Dhruva Lok. One day in solitude he explained to him the secret power of Tarak Mantra and passed it on to him. Swamiji said - 'Power of Mantra is not merely restricted to the acts like enlivening the idol, but has far reaching energy like easily materialising various desires too. Mantra itself is a power and its power has no limitations.' Once he advised him on Param Guhya Tatva and said, 'One who masters japas* of three types, ajapajapas* of four types, parajapas* of eight types, is never vulnerable to any material attractions. These accomplishments adorn the person with all the powers and he who is not oblivious to the virtues becomes omnipotent and flies piercing through the solar galaxy. The visionary having mastered this ultimate Mantra achieves the high state of renounciation, high state of being with the Supreme and tastes immortality. Once during the peak of

the sadhana, he also empowered Anantananda to grant his own separate discipleships. Anantananda reached the stage of Acharya from the stage of disciple. Swami Ramananda wished to build a grand powerful chain of entitled saints who would stop the tyranny, cruelty and religious conversions; who would ensure a bond between the tortured Hindu community with the Sanatana (ancient religion) and its the rich culture. Such was Swamiji's vision, his desire, for the accomplishment of which he bestowed the honour of Acharya hood to Anantanand with all the secret powers.



Four

One Siddhanath yogi of Dholagiri, by name Kripashankar, was travelling by the sky to some place along with his followers. At that time, a very strong storm blocked their way in the sky. In addition, the afternoon sun was also troubling them. Swami Ramananda was viewing this scene with his divine power. He created a desire in the mind of Kripashankar to come down to the hermitage to rest for a while and he also asked Anantananda to welcome the yogi and to arrange for his comfortable stay in the newly built Satsang Bhawan. As soon as the Nath yogi Kripashankar came down and entered the hermitage, he found that the carpets were laid to welcome him in the Bhavan. Acharya Anantananda was waiting at the entrance itself with a water-pitcher. Yogi Kripashankar was quite amazed at the prior arrangements. He wondered, if the disciple was so accomplished, then what height his master would have achieved. He expressed his desire to Anantanand to meet his Gurudev. Acharya Anantananda replied, "Please be comfortable, Gurudev himself will appear before you." After a while the curtain opened and Swamiji appeared. Yogi Kripashankar bowed with respect. Swami Ramananda raised him up with affection, embraced him and made him sit by his side. Yogi Kripashankar's joy knew no bounds at seeing the divine appearance. Joining his hands he said, "Please pardon me for the hardship I caused you in this hot afternoon. Be kind to place your blessing palm on my head and kindle within me the fire of renounciation through which I can realise the Ultimate Truth. You are the great exponent of philosophy and sciences. I adore your deep knowledge and wisdom, you have explored the intricacies laid in different branches and sub-branches of the Vedas and have cleared all doubts in the minds of the people. You are the unique venerable saint on this earth."

With a pause Swamiji said, "Yogi is one who treats both the natural and supernatural events equally. A saint is one who, even when he is emotionally disturbed, does not touch material wealth or an enticer. Faithful wife is one who maintains her authority with the strength of her chastity." Yogi Kripashankar was overjoyed after getting answers to his confusions and doubts. It was late in the afternoon and the hurricane was subsiding.

Yogi Kripashankar again and again bowed before Swamiji and took his permission to leave.

The news about Swamiji's yogic powers had begun to be talked about across every corner of the world. After a few days, Raja Pratap Rai, fondly referred to as Peepaji, who was ruling the Gagaron Fort in Rajasthan and desired to become a disciple of Swamiji. He came to the Shrimath with his entourage. From the beginning, Shri Pratap Rai was a worshipper of Shakta deities. He was a very great devotee of Goddess Durga. He conducted sacrifices to the Goddess who was pleased with his sincere devotion. Once, King Pratap Rai was called upon the great gurus of Karmakanda to organise a great yojna for the Goddess. Just when the various offerings were being given and the flames of the Homa touched the sky with the fragrance of sandal, the Goddess appeared there and said, "I am pleased; say what is your desire?" King Pratap Rai said, "I aspire for salvation." The Goddess answered, "Ask anything else but the salvation, I will grant it to you. I cannot grant you the salvation." The King said, "I do not want anything other than salvation." Then Goddess said, "The deities can grant only material things, not spiritual. For salvation, you must look for a Guru who is a liberated person. It is impossible to attain salvation without a Guru." On this, Pratap Rai said, "I do not know who such liberated person is." The Goddess answered, there is a highly realized person in Kashi and his name is Ramananda. He can certainly help you to attain liberation." The King folded both his hands in respect and said, "You have shown me the path for my liberation. I am deeply indebted to you in my heart."

When Pratap Rai arrived at the Srinath at Kashi in the company of his army, he sent out his servant to Swamiji to inform that Peepa, the King of Gagaron Fort, had come to meet him with a desire to become his disciple and to offer his humble services. Acharya Anantnand brought this information to Swamiji. Swamiji replied, 'When he has come to become my disciple, where is the need of this big army? Let them go back first." The king complied with the instructions immediately. The King then requested Acharya Anantananda again, but again Swamiji said, "Why should he wear royal dress and ornaments if he has come to be a disciple?" Immediately the king put off all the valuables and sent them back and reported to Swamiji. Swamiji said, "Is the king ready to do whatever I ask him to?" The king replied, "I have come here on the command of Bhagavati Devi, discarding all my royalty, just to become Swamiji's disciple. Whatever

Swamiji asks me to do, I am prepared for it." Immediately Swamiji asked him to run to the well and jump into it. The king went to the well at once and was about to jump when suddenly Acharya Anananthadji arrived there in time to stop him. Ananthanandji took the king to Swamiji. Swamiji came out from behind the curtain to give him divine darshan. The king bowed before him and offered his full devotion. Swamiji said, "Stay here for a few days. Acharya Anantanandji will look after your comforts. The king will get his Diksha mantra at a proper time." Saying this, Swamiji went back to his cave. The king remained in the hermitage under Acharya Anantanandji's care. One day, Swamiji called him up and gave him the "Pancha Samskar Yukta' mantra diksha and made him his disciple. Swamiji instructed him to meditate on the Lord. For quite a long time, under the direction of Acharya Anantananda, the king spent his days doing "shabda surati yoga" and chanting "Siyaram". Swamiji expressed his happiness over his dedication, devotion and eagerness to achieve the target and said to him, "You may go back to Gagaron and continue the meditations on this mantra in solitude. I will be arriving there during my travel." Following the Guru's command, king Pratap Rai returned to Gagaron.

After a few days, the Swamiji performed such a miracle that the name of the hermitage and of Swamiji were regarded with great veneration in the vicinity. It was the month of Shravana. There was a very heavy downpour on the previous day. The Ganga was overflowing. One brahmin from South, Gangaram by name, reached the Panchaganga Ghat to immerse the bones and ashes of his near relative in Kashi. As he was immersing the ashes in the water of the river Ganga, his feet slipped and he got caught in the flow. Seeing this, his companion Jafar also came down to save him, but he also started drowning. All the pandas and the pujaris on the bank were helplessly watching this terrible scene. No one dared to enter the strong current of water. At that time, a small boy came there with a lean bamboo pole and crashed down into the water. He braved the flow and brought the two persons on to the bank. The people wanted to thank him but before that he had disappeared. One of Swami Ramananda's devotees and well-wisher was standing at that spot. He started praising Swami Ramananda loudly. When the two persons realised that Swami Ramananda's hermitage was located just above the bank and this was the miracle by him, they went straight to the hermitage. Just then, the sound of the conch was heard from the cave. A divine light spread all over. The curtain opened up and Swamiji appeared. The two persons prostrated at his holy feet. Gangaram asked him with folded hands, "We heard that we were saved

from the flowing water of the Ganga by none other but you. Is it true?"

"Not me, it was Supreme Lord, Sri Ram."

"A devotee was saying that you are the incarnation of the Supreme Lord Sri Ram. Seeing you, our lives are fulfilled." Swamiji stopped their queries and said, "Jaffar is your best companion. You treat him like a relative not like a servant." As Swamiji was saying this, Gangaram got overjoyed and said, "I have never seen a liberated person like you who considers everyone equally. Victory to thee." He clasped Swamiji's feet. Acharya Anantananda brought two plates of 'prasad'. Both accepted the prasad and left the place happily.

The fame of Swami Ramananda as a yogi of miraculous powers was spreading day by day. He established his identity with his deep knowledge of the Manusmiriti and surprised every one. Once there was a dispute between Jangam Swami and Sen about cutting off the tuft. This event occurred on the bank of Panchaganga. Sen had removed all the matted hair of Jangam Swami, but kept the tuft. Jangam Swami was refusing, telling, "I cannot do the sin of converting a Hindu into a Turk by cutting away his tuft." Jangam Swami tried to convince him, "Cutting away the tuft is symbolic of detachment from the worldly things, not of becoming a Turk." But Sen stuck to his argument and this resulted in an endless debate. At last, it was decided that since Swamiji was a great proficient in religion and was staying in the hermitage above, they would get the solution from him. When they reached the hermitage, Acharya Anantanandji met them. They described everything to him. At that time, the sound of conch came from the cave. Immediately, the minds of the two became clear. Swamiji spoke from behind the curtain, "Poets and writers know that the hair is not removed, but when the intellect of the wise, who become one with Brahman the Supreme Power and remain inseparable from Him, only then the tuft can be cut, this is what is prescribed in the Manusmriti." Swamiji's words brought satisfaction for both of them. Jangam Swami bowed and went back, but Sen remained there. He started attending the satsang everyday. Later he received diksha from Swawmiji and became his disciple. Swamiji became so pleased with his service that he brought him up to the level of a Siddha Purusha.

Sen originally belonged to Bandhav Gadh, the capital of Baghel Khand. At Swamiji's order, he went back to Bandhav Gadh and gave prominance to the service of the saints. Swamiji had given him an assurance

that he was always with Sen and asked him not to worry at all. Sen was to disseminate the Bhakti Cult in his area. The place was royal. There would be no need to fear the wicked persons. If Sen could convince the king of Baghel Khand, then he would get all co-operation from the king in spreading the cult.

Sen went back to Bandhav Gadh and continued to lead the life of a barber with due devotion. When the king, whose name was Rajaram Waghela heard that Sen had come back from Kashi and had started his living as a barber, he sent a servant for him and employed him to massage him. Sen's life continued in this fashion. He spent his leisure time serving the holy saints and singing sacred verses.

One day, as he was approaching the king's palace, a group of saints came across him. That group asked him for meals (prasada). Sen considered serving the saints as his first priority. He came back home leading the saints. The king was waiting for Sen to come. Swamiji disguised himself as Sen and reached the palace. He massaged the king, much better than Sen ever did. king's vertebra had been paining, but Swamiji relieved him from the pain with his massage.

On the following day, when Sen came to the palace, with fear in his mind, the king said to him that the pain in his vertebra had gone and that his massage earlier day was very good. Hearing this, Sen recalled and realised that Swamiji had executed what he had promised him. Sen silently bowed to the Swamiji in his mind and expressed his deep gratitude. Then he got more immersed in the elixir of devotion and continued his work to serve the saints.

When the king of Bandhav Gadh came to know of this miracle, all his subjects praised Swami Ramananda enthusiastically for his taking care of the disciples. As a result, Sen began to be considered as an enlightened sage in the whole of Baghal Khand. Gradually, a large number of people became his disciples. They started remaining in meditation with the sacred name of Siyaram with Surati Yoga leading to salvation and made their lives meaningful.

This event, which occurred in Bandhav Gadh enabled Swamiji's fame to reach far South. The devotees from South came down to have glimpse of the Swamiji and become his disciples.

One brahmin from Maharashtra, Vithal by name, heard about Swamiji

and without informing his wife, came over to Kashi in order to become his disciple and to attain liberation. Coming to Kashi, he met Swamiji and requested him to accept him as his disciple. Swamiji's doctrine of keeping faith in the Lord had spread far away even to South. He tested his worthiness to become his disciple for some days. One day he administered the 'Panch-Sanskar-yukta-mantra diksha' to Vithal and accepted him as his disciple and gave him a new name - Bhavanand. Swamiji made him stay there and asked him to sing sacred verses in solitude and to attend the satsang every day. Vithal followed his instructions and sang the verses alone. He also religiously attended the satsang. After a few days, his wife, enquiring his whereabouts reached the hermitage. She told entire story to Swamiji who advised Vithal, "you cannot attain deliverance by causing grief to any soul. You can sing the verses and praise Lord while staying with your family. Many householders have attained liberation. As long as you have your family, it would be better for you to remain at home and continue the meditation with selfless devotion". Vithal said, "She and myself both are here, then why not perform the meditation here itself?" Swamiji replied, "It is written in your destiny that you are going to be a father. Keep faith, at a proper time a divine prodigy will arrive in your household." Hearing this, Vithal and his wife looked at each other happily. With some hesitation, Vithal said, "You have been kind to bless us, now my mind is very eager to behold the appearance of the Supreme Lord." Swamiji said, "Family life also can be led with detachment. Both your desires will be fulfilled." Vithal bowed and placed his head on the feet of Swamiji. His wife also did so. Swamiji placed his hand on Vithal's head and said, "Now you return to your house and follow the mantra-diksha you have been given with the method of meditation." Receiving the blessings of Swamiji, both bade farewell to the place in happiness. While leaving Vithal invited him to the South, and said, "Whenever you wish to come to that region, I shall be grateful if you inform me so that I will be at your service." Swamiji, raising his right hand silently conveyed his constent.

Swamiji's fame spread out wings and spread in all directions. People competed to perform spiritual meditation and become his disciples. One of them was Sri Chandrahari. He became Swamiji's disciple and took the name 'Sukhanand'. He was a resident of Ujjaini, the famous town of Lord Mahakaal. His father Pundit Tripurari Bhat was living in Kireetpur, a neighbouring village. His mother's name was Jambavathi Godavari. Tripurari Bhat did not have children for a long time, so he stayed in Ujjain and

worshipped Lord Mahakal with devotion and dedication. Because of his worship of the Lord, Jambavathi gave birth to Sri Chandra Hari. The mark of the crescent moon was seen on his forehead. Hence, Tripurari Bhat named him as 'Chandrahari'. Since the child was born with the blessings of Lord Shiva, naturally Chandrahari had the protection of the serpent bearer - Shiva. One day, the mother Jambavathy saw a serpent around when she was looking after Chandrahari. Since then, she did not allow Chandrhari anywhere alone. Whenever she went to have darshan of Lord Mahakal, she also took Chandrahari along with her holding him by fingers. She wanted to accomplish two purposes, one - Chandrahari should not be left alone at home and second - the child should develop devotion towards the Lord in his heart. And it really happened so. The devotion within him towards Shiva became so great that even when Jambuwanthy was not going to the temple, he would force her to go there. Chandrahari was a divine child. When he was admitted for studentship, there too he demonstrated his sharp intellect. Within a short time, be became an exponent of Shruti, Smriti and Shastras.

In olden days, in Ujjain, religious discussions had been taking place. One of the conditions of the debate was that the defeated party had to pay a pre-decided sum of money to the winner's family till a member of the family defeated them in subsequent debate. Once a messenger from the winner Sri Rangaraj Dikshit, came to Pundit Tripurari Bhat to demand the money when he was not at home. At that time, Chandrahari refused to give the money and said that he was ready for the religious debate. On Chandrahari's declaration a debate was conducted after four days. The young Chandrahari defeated Sri Rangaraj in the debate and also put an end to this tradition. Chandrhari was just seventeen at the time of the debate. At the time of the birth of Chandrahari, one astrologer had predicted that if he saw his image anytime in any lake or a tank, he would leave his house and go elsewhere. After celebrating the victory in debate somehow Chandrahari came to see his reflection in a lake and on the same night he silently left his home. In the morning, people searched for him everywhere and finally found him in deep meditation in a garden.

His victory was the talk of the town in Ujjain. He was young and handsome. Attracted by his handsome face, a Brahmin girl fell in love with him. The same night a divine saint appeared in his dream and said, "This is Maya, an illusion. Do not get entangled in it. Proceed directly to Kashi, have diksha from Swami Ramananda and make your life in this world and

the next meaningful." Chandrahari regarded this divine advice and with a detached mind, he left Ujjain and reached Kashi. He met Rama Bharati, a sage on the bank of Ganga, who took him to his dwelling giving him confidence in "Parmartha Siddhanta"*. When he was staying with Rama Bharati, he came across Richik Rishi who asked him, "When you were asked in your dream to meet Swami Ramananda, why did you not go there?" Chandrahari told him his disposition. Rama Bharati was a clever saint. After considering the situation he himself took Chandrahari to Shrimath and presented him before Swamiji. Rama Bharati narrated all the background to Swamiji and added that Chandrahari was an exponent himself who wishes to renounce the material world. He requested Swamiji to give him mantra-diksha and accept him as his disciple.

On the request of Rama Bharati, Swamiji gave the mantra-diksha with "panch-samskar" to Chandrahari and accepted him as his disciple. He was given a new name "Sukhanand". Sukhanand continued to stay in the hermitage. On Swamiji's direction, in a short time Acharya Anantanand taught him the Shabda-Surati Yoga, which was woven with Lord Siyaram's name. According to Acharya Anantanand's instructions, he started the 'mantra - sadhana' in solitude and very soon entered the high blissful state to become an enlightened sage.

Assured of his wisdom and perfection, Swami Ramananda remained in Chitrakoot and asked Sukhanand to spread Bhakti among the tribals of that region. As directed, Sukhanand arrived at Chitrakoot, stayed in a place called Ram Shayya and started the sacred chanting of Lord Rama woven with 'Sabda - Surati -Yoga'. There, Saint Sukhanand established several traditions with his miraculous powers. He could inculcate full faith for him. He moved from village to village and distributed Swami Ramananda's "Moksha Prasad" (blessings for being liberated) among the people. He worked hard to rejuvenate the religion and unity amongst the tribals. Thus the poison - weed of 'adharma' (sinful acts) dried away for ever. The fear which was established there by the intruders was uprooted from the minds of the tribal community. This brought glorious assurance of safety to saints, brahmins, cows and guests in the whole village.

During this time a miraculous and interesting event took place. There was a young woman from Sisodiya clan who could remember her past life. Her name was Roopahali Rajakumari. Hearing about the divinity of Swamiji, she came to Shrimath. Her name in her past birth was Shashi and she was a brahmin girl then. She had fallen in deep love with a youth by name

Punnu. She wanted to marry him, but her wish could not be fulfilled. Based on her knowledge about her past life she and her family vigorously searched for Punnu. They consulted several astrologers about his name in the present birth, but they could not get any clue. Hearing the stories about the holiness and insight of Swami Ramananda, she came to his feet. Acharya Anantananda came to know her story and took her directly to Swamiji. Listening to the love story of her past life and her honest and undeterred love, his heart melted. He said, "Dear girl, your wish will certainly get fulfilled. Nobody has ever returned from this hermitage disappointed. Wait for sometime; your beloved of former life is coming to this place." As Swamiji was saying this, she went into her thoughts captivated by the scenes of her love for Punnu in her last life. Her dormant desire inflamed with a strong hope of gaining her lost love. Her devotion to the Swamiji strengthened. Whatever she had heard about the power of Swamiji, she was experiencing it to be an amazing fact. In her heart of hearts she became very happy.

In a short while, Puhkarsi, a cabinet member from Rana Hamir of Ranathambore came there carrying great many fruits, flowers and sweets and other gifts. As he reached there, he set all those baskets at the feet of Swami Ramananda. Beholding this youth, Sisodia princess's heart blossomed like a sunflower facing the sun. She was seeing him for the first time; but his raised forehead, fair complexion, strong physique and attractive figure told her that he was none other but Punnu, her beloved in the past life. She rubbed her eyelids again and again. She began to see him with her own eyes. The cabinet member, Puhkarsi, also saw this girl with beautiful nose, deer like eyes, blossomed lips. He too was greatly attracted to her and despite the austere atmosphere of the hermitage, his mind ran to her with intense fascination. When Swamiji observed their longing for each other and read their inner feelings, he turned towards the princess and said, "He is Punnu of your past life. Identify him." As Swamiji was saying this, the young princess blushed and her eyes lowered. With bowed head but raised eyebrows she saw him once again; her eyes filled with great love. Swamiji said to Puhkarsi, "She is the princess of Sisodia clan. She remembers all things of her past life. She has come to this hermitage to ask me where you were. Even today, she longs for you." Swamiji blew the conch. Immediately, both of them remembered everything about their happy loving days of their past life. All the past happenings arose in their mind. Some Muslims wanted to take her away by kidnapping her, but they vowed to each other that in their next birth they would meet again and she

immolated herself. Now the feeling of mutual love had erupted again. They were now anxious to become united. At that time, getting a signal from Swamiji, Acharya Aantanand went inside the cave and brought out two garlands. He gave one to each of them. They exchanged the garlands and made their unified love permanent. They got bound in their holy knot. Greatly indebted to Swamiji, both of them begged Swamiji to grant them salvation and to show them the path of renounciation. But Swamiji advised them, "You must wait; you must enter into a matrimonial life. You have to complete the love story. Keeping it halfway, you cannot achieve the Ultimate Truth. First you must carryout the householder's life and its duties. You may enjoy and honour to your pure love. Come back after accepting the penance of Satyavratha and Satitva. Then, it would be a proper time to attain knowledge of the 'Ultimate Truth'. It is impossible to attain the salvation keeping the burning desire of love life unfulfilled. Detachment is the first step for that." Both took leave from the hermitage after having Swamiji's blessings.

Among the aims of Swamiji's life, the foremost was to preserve the culture and philosophy of this country. The fact that many holy souls took birth in order to extend their co-operation to Swami Ramananda was even well-known to all the gods. In order to maintain the integrity of the society with the help of religion, culture and spirituality and to imbibe within people the desire to get enlightened. It was important that they should have the opportunity to behold the Almighty. Therefore, even the gods were eager to suggest the renounciate souls to get at the feet of Swami Ramananda and be his disciple to get his blessings in order to be liberated from the cycle of lives and attain ultimate salvation. We had this knowledge through ancient spirituality, its exponents and through gods and goddesses. However it is really unbelievable and surprising that the Supreme Lord himself has stated this. We have a story from the Dhuvan village of Tonk District of Rajasthan. It is about Dhanna, a son of a farmer. The Lord had said to him, "Dhanna, I am satisfied with your devotion, but there is a big lapse in your worship. Till now you have not chosen an enlightened sage as your Guru. On this, Dhanna said, "When I have met you in person, where is the need to call someone else as Guru?" Then Bhagwan said "Dhanna, I have introduced this tradition. The human beings have to follow this rule. Otherwise, their devotion becomes incomplete and they have to again take re-birth. After surrendering himself to the Guru alone my devotee deserves moksha". Dnanna said, "I desire nothing except your presence. What can I do with liberation?". Bhagwan then

explained, "See, now I myself am compelled to come to you. If you will choose a Guru and get liberated, you will remain with me forever and I will be saved from taking trouble to come to you every now and then. Do you want to give me the pain every time?" Dhanna said, "My Lord, I had never known about this. Who will want to give trouble to the Lord? Please tell me, whom will I chose as Guru?" Then Bhagwan said, "At this time, there is such a distinguished Guru on earth; he is Swami Ramananda. He is the image of mine. He will accept you as his disciple."

Even before Dhanna could reach Kashi, Swami Ramananda had received the God's message. He was waiting for Dhanna's arrival. Dhanna also reached Kashi without delay. He sat in front of Swamiji and narrated freely about his real desire. He told him how the Lord Himself was taking care of his farm and how the Lord was satisfied about his ardent devotion and how he Himself like a servant used to come to the help of Dhanna. Hearing this truth, Swamiji was very much impressed and said, "Who can ignore God's orders?" Without any delay, Swamiji bestowed him with Panch-Sanskar Mantra Diksha and accepted him as his disciple. He told Acharya Anantananda to train him about Siyaram- Nama - Meditation. Then to Dhanna he said, "Stay here for a few days and attain the divine power by practice and then only return to your village. You will attain liberation in this life itself. Rest assured! Till then, you will be wandering as before with the God himself. What better fortune one can have than this?" Dhanna, now a saint, stayed in Kashi for some time meditating in solitude. Then as a liberated soul, he went back to his village Dhuvan where the Lord was waiting for him and on his arrival embraced him.

* * *

Five

Swami Ramananda brought aobout one more reform - He opened the gates of spirituality for women devotees too, thus letting the world to know the principles of Ramananda Dharma. Swamiji's miracles crossed the borders of India and enhanced his fame. At the same time, his generosity also spread everywhere. There was no limit to Swamiji's greatness. In Tripura, located on the eastern border of India, there lived a pundit, Prabhakar Sharma by name. His only daughter Padma, when started knowing things, was insistently telling her father to take her to Kashi and allow her to meet Swami Ramananda. "Take me to Kashi, Take me to Kashi, allow me to meet Swamiji, without seeing him I will not live, let me see him, let me meet him." was her persistent desire. Pundit Prabhakar Sharma could not disappoint her. He regarded her as Goddess Lakshmi herself, because of her supernatural performances, her sharp wit and uncommon aptitude and unparalleled beauty. From her childhood, he regarded her very highly. He never let her feel disappointed or distressed. Prabhakar himself was a devotee of Goddess Lakshmi and had received her favours. Once Goddess Lakshmi was very pleased with his devotion and dropped a lotus in his wife's lap as a mark of her blessings. Padma was born after this incident. She treated her as Goddess Lakshmi's boon. Her firm belief was that it was Goddess Lakshmi who selected her to appear on the earth. Finally the parents took Padma to Kashi Shrimath as she desired. Swamiji had á divine vision through which he could visualize past, present and future. He opened the curtain and presented his divine appearance to the guests. After formal respects, Prabhakar narrated everything from Padma's birth till her desire to come to Shrimath. Swamiji knew all this beforehand, yet he listened to it. It was in his knowledge that the blissful spirits of Dwilok* (the other world) were sending liberated souls to India to rescue and bring back the respected positions of those women of India who were attacked, kidnapped and were the victims of cruelty. Swamiji considered Padma as one link in that chain and so he accepted her after giving her Tatkal-diksha - immediate discipleship. Swamiji asked Pundit Prabhakar to remain in Kashi so that Padma could transform herself into an

accomplished saint achieving a few "sanctified powers" and she should also be able to propagate the holy doctrine in society. Her renounciation should lead her on the perfect path of ultimate enlightenment. Pandit Prabhakar respecting his daughter's desires and Swamiji's instructions, chose a proper dwelling near the hermitage and stayed there. Everyday, he took Padma to the hermitage and participated in the satsang. At an opportune time, Swamiji gave her the mantra-diksha with panch-sanskar and taught her the Shabda-Surati yoga.

Padma chanted the diksha - mantra rhythmically with her breathing. She sat in meditation and would enter into trance for hours together. The spiritual consciousness moved down from her head to her heart. Gradually it moved via Manipur chakra and Swadhishthana chakra and reached the fourth entrance of Sushumna in Muladhara chakra. This in fact was a blissful gift of Guru's blessing. By nature she was born with divinity, her predilections were for sacred and divine things. She had reached the correct place, getting proper yogic knowledge from an omniscient Guru. She had therefore no difficulty in knocking the doors - chain to get to the fourth entrance. The Shabda - Surati Yoga with Siyaram Mantra helped her in opening the fourth entry door. She could visualize the form of 'atma-devata' (the omnipotent goddess). Reaching this state of accomplishment, she became "atmastha" (fully concentrated on her inner soul). She led a pure life to become a "jivan-mukta" (liberated soul) and readied herself to perform the human service.

The news that Swami Ramananda had made a brahmin lady from Tripura a saint, spread to all pilgrim centres of Kashi. Here, the elated saint Padmavati started organising separate satsang and delivered the divine experiences open heartedly to all. During her discourses, she said, "Even Lord Vishwanath had, before the Vedic age, acquired the mantrik and tantrik powers only through chanting the Rama - nama. A new environment of social equality started spreading in the city of Viswanath. The women who worshipped Lord Vishwanath sat in 'padmasana' (a lotus like sitting position) and silently chanted the sacred name of Lord Ram. They considered Rama - nama as the 'mantra' for Lord Shankar. The womenfolk of Kashi developed a joyful bliss for Rama - nama. Because of the propagation of Rama nama by tapasvini Padma, Shrimath was vibrant with waves of bliss. For some years Padma followed Swamiji's directions by touring far places and delivering the sacred message for people's awakening. She performed this task with sincerity and courage. She saved

the women's community from the vices (vidharma), and bonded them with virtues (dharma) and culture. Padma prayed to Swamiji to bring her back to her native place of residence when she became ill. Accordingly Swamiji directed her to go over to her home. She left her everlasting name in the minds of her devotees and reached her blessed abode.

Swami Ramananda regarded music as a divine boon. He happily sang with his melodious voice. Pundit Sureshwar Prasad Sharma was living in Paigham Village near Lucknow. He had a son named Bhayan Kumar. Since his childhood, Bhayan had an ear for music. His voice too was melodious. Whenever he sang, the village people listened merrily. Bhayan Kumar was a handsome person. He bonded the listeners with his music. Pundit Suresh Sharma conducted all the rituals for his son in the family tradition. He gave him proper training in classical music by an experienced teacher from Lucknow based-family having rich heritage of music. After the thread ceremony, he was given the Gayatri mantra and as a result, he developed in his heart an extremely captivating devotion. He was considered as one of the celebrated exponents of devotional music.

Influenced by the music of Bhayan Kumar, a brahmin by name Narayan started attending the "Purascharan*" programmes without being invited. Due to reasons not known, Bhayan started addressing him as "Mama" (uncle) and Narayan started referring Bhayan as "Narad" because of his musical talents. Bhayan Kumar had passed his childhood and was entering the adolescent stage. His fame impressed everyone. In the neighbourhood of his house a brahmin girl got fascinated by his form and virtues and fell in love with him. Her name was Sursari. She submitted herself completely to Bhayan Kumar. On the other side, Narayan was eagerly trying to take Bhayan to Kashi and make him the disciple of the saint of the century, Ramananda, with a view to make him feel the intensity of devotion. Swami Ramananda also had heard the name of Bhayan Kumar. Narayan began narrating to him all divine miracles of Swami Ramananda every day. Bhayan Kumar's mind became restless to go to Kashi and become Swamiji's disciple. One day in an extreme trance of devotion, he decided to accompany Narayan and Bhayan finally reached Kashi.

Sursari was hearing from many days about Bhayan Kumar's desire to go to Kashi and becoming a disciple of Swami Ramananda. She had reached Shrimath of Kashi even before Bhayan Kumar reached there. At that time Swamiji was just outside. She went and touched his feet. Swamiji, considering her as a young woman desiring to enter into her marital life,

placed his hand on her head to bless her and said 'You will ever remain in sacred marital tie'. As it was getting dark in the evening, the disciples closed the gates of the hermitage.

At that time, Bhayan Kumar also arrived there. He wished to make his presence there as a singer and honour the hermitage. He kept five unlit lamps filled with sesame oil at the entrance and started singing the 'dipak raaga*'. Poets and artists are naturally proud of their knowledge. Seeing Bhayan singing, people were attracted there. Gradually as the singing charged the atmosphere, all those five lamps suddenly got lit. The astonished and surprised crowd showered him with praises. Suddenly a sound of conch came from inside the cave. It echoed in the heart of Bhayan and he went into a deep sense of pleasure. Hearing the commotion outside, the disciples opened the gate of the hermitage. Bhayan prayed them that he the intense desire to hear the sound of conch again or else he would cease to be alive. His desire instantly materialised and he fell down motionless. Acharya Anantananda came running and sprinkled sacred water on his face. Then his life was regained. The curtain opened and Swamiji gave him his divine appearance. Bhayan got up and touched the feet of Swamiji. He said, "I was sent here by an individual called Narayan, in order to learn 'Paramartha Bodh*'. He was with me up to the bank of the Ganga. Suddenly he vanished. Kindly grant me refuge. Enlighten my life with your divine knowledge." Seeing his burning desire to become a disciple with a renounced mind, Sursari also hurried near Swamiji. She said, "Swamiji you have blessed me to become a "Soubhagyawati". How would this be possible if he became a recluse"? Swamiji had a vision that could see everything. He knew not only their present life, but also their previous lives. Swamiji blew his conch and both of them immediately went into trance and experienced the feeling of deep renunciation. Thereafter Sursari requested that she too be granted the 'Parmartha Bodh'. Swamiji bestowed both of them with 'Pancha Samskara' mantra diksha. Bhayan Kumar got a new name 'Sursuranand'. Swamiji liked the name Sursari, so he said, 'You will remain as Sursari'. Then Anantananda brought a garland from inside and gave it to Surasari. Swamiji said, 'Put this garland around Sursuranand's neck, so my blessings given to you will come true. Now both of you keep chanting the mantra with a desire to relinquish the material world. Anantananda will teach you the method of Shabda-Surati-Yoga and Rama-bhakti. Follow and practice meditation." The couple stayed there with

their minds immersed in devotion. Gradually, they reached the fourth door of meditation. Sursuranand became a glorious disciple of Swamiji.

That time in the South the Muslim Ruler Malik Kafur had spread the regime of terror amongst the people. When Swamiji was told about it, he told the couple, "Both of you go to the South and work there to remove the sufferings of the people. Open the eyes of that fanatic and bring him to the right path." Obeying Swamiji's instructions, Sursuranand and Sursari proceeded to South. Sursuranand did the first thing; he appeared in Malik Kafur's dream and advised him to resort to the right path. Malik Kafur was much astounded and began to look for the person who had appeared in his dream. When the information of such a person reached him, he himself went and remained in the service of Sursuranand and sought his blessings. Sant Sursuranand asked him to stop his atrocities against Hindus, their pilgrim places and their places of worship. He also gave Malik Kafur the knowledge of the real 'Truth'. Consequently all the atrocities committed at the command of Malik Kafur was ordered to be stopped immediately. Saint Sursuranand and Sursari worked together in the South, spreading the "Samanvaya Sadbhav*".

After the demise of Sursari, Sant Sursuranand came back to Kashi. From there he went to Ayodhya where he left for his final divine abode.

Swamiji performed another great task to stop the increasing violent attacks on "dharma" (virtues). He called Kali - the Ruler of Kali Yuga and instructed him not to put hurdles on the activities concerning human welfare. Responding to the yogic call of Swamiji, Kali holding his royal sceptre presented himself before Swamiji. He stole inside the curtain and sat on the golden "panch-patra' seat. He said, "Swamiji, you are the supreme saint who treats everyone equally. You neither indulge in affection nor enmity. You are born for the welfare of humanity. I ask you to show kindness to me also as you have done to Sat, Treta and Dwapara Yugas". On having the divine sight of Swamiji, Kali considered himself very fortunate. He folded his hands and said, "I am bowing before you and shall ever be at your service. Order me the service I should render. "Kali, in every life, I have been uplifting the downtrodden, cheated and weaker sections of the humanity. To them, I have given the honour and restored dignity to mankind. The lowly and the exploited women, who have been suffering for centuries are given back their respectful status. Even the Almighty has taken incarnations to help such humans. He has destroyed the wicked and

liberated the godly men. I too am following their good deeds. I have to tell you this: Do not bring any obstruction in my activities involving human welfare. The whole world knows about your character. It is with your arrival that all the disasters, all the sins, all the miscreants and all the chaos come together all at the same time. I can fight against all of them, but it is very difficult to fight against you." Having heard Swamiji, Kali fell at his feet, and started admiring him. "Oh my Lord, the Liberator of the downtrodden, the treasure of knowledge, I know that the Almighty has sent you to this earth for the good of mankind. How can I put a hurdle in God's actions? Kindly ignore my evil and sinful self and accept me at your service. I bow my head before you for the well-being of the people. It is my assurance that there will no more obstruction whatsoever from my side to the virtuous. I am aware of the greatness of the "Bija Mantra - Rama Nama". Lord Sadashiv too has chanted this mantra. This "bija - mantra" is present in every atom in the universe. I am enjoying the power only because of that. I have always regarded it as the one ultimate sovereignty. I solemnly assure you, my Master, that I will cooperate with all your activities. I will not in anyway bring obstructions in it." Saying this, Kali fell at the feet of Swamiji and sought his blessings. Swamiji chanted the "Tarak Mantra*" - Rama Nama and bid him farewell.

Just after this event, the sacred river Ganga appeared there holding a bowl of "Payasa", rice porridge. She said, "Don't accept the payasa* which the brahmachari is bringing to you. The grains used in that are not sacred. It is not from a sacred place. Saints should accept only "Satvik" (pure) grains brought by persons of mental purity, else it causes adverse effects on the saintly persons". So saying, Ganga who had appeared there in the form of a girl placed the pot near Swamiji. "Please accept this, and not the payasa which the brahmachari is going to bring for you." After Ganga had disappeared, the brahmachari came there carrying a bowl payasa. Swamiji said, "Ganga Bhagavati appeared here in a girl's form and has already kept this payasa for me." Astounded with this miraculous event, the brahmachari became very happy and took away the payasa which he brought.

Swamiji mentioned this event in his daily discourse. "Devotees of Ram should lead their life in moral activities. The wealth acquired through ethical deeds gives you happiness. Besides, the seeker gets spiritual satisfaction also. Wealth acquired through evil deeds desecrate meditation and the soul. The sins do not let your minds steady and keep deviating

you from meditation. Is this not a well-known universal truth that disposition of your mind directly depends upon what type of food you eat? A spiritual devotee should keep his physique pure, and therefore should take care to see that the food he takes is pure." He also narrated the event about Ganga bringing the payasa for him with an advice not to accept the payasa made out of sinful deeds of the vaishyas. Swamiji used to take payasa only once in a day. Then onwards, the devotees began to give importance to this aspect.

Swami Ramananda was concerned to the core about the atrocities against dharma in society. He made relentless efforts to bring the people of all religions together with a view to eliminating the traditional, dogmatic quarrels amongst them. He therefore needed disciples belonging to all the religions. Time cooperated with him. During this time, one Maheshwar Mishra reached Srimath along with his son, following the directions of the goddess Vindhyavasini Devi. The Goddess had asked him that their son after the ritual of upanayana, should be taken to the hermitage to see Swamiji. The boy's name was Narahari. Maheshwar was a resident of a village near Vrindavan. His wife's name was Ambika. They did not have a child for a long time. With an urge for a child they came to the temple of Vindhyavasini Devi and prayed with fervent devotion. The Goddess was pleased and blessed them with the jewel of a son. She also told them that he was a heavenly child and would accomplish a great tasks." After the sacred thread ceremony, Mishra reached Srimath with the boy. He first met Acharya Anantananda and narrated to Acharya the entire story. Thereupon Anantananda said, "He will be accepted as a disciple by Swamiji". Just then, ever-cognigant, all-knowing Swamiji blew his south threaded conch. The boy, Narahari instantly went into a trance. After sometime, the curtain was raised and Swamiji appeared. The boy came out of his 'samadhi'. Along with Maheshwar, Narahari too touched Swamiji's feet. Even before Acharya Anantananda could say anything, Swamiji said, "His sacred diksha is already over. Now purify him with Pancha Sanskara. Present him with the formal diksha and teach him the method of meditation." So saying, Swamiji went back to his cave. Acharya Anantananda gave him mantra diksha according to the custom and gave him a new name - Naraharianand. Maheshwar Mishra left the boy there and went back to his village. Acharya Anantananda began to teach the boy Naraharianand the secret truth of all the religious books. After a few days, he taught him 'Shabda - Surati - Yoga' which was a simple sanctifying chanting of Rama - nama. After that, Acharya Anantananda kept disciple Naraharianand in a solitary room on

the banks of the Ganga and directed him to meditate there. As instructed, the boy Naraharianand remained there, immersing himself in devotional 'sadhana'.

Once a girl from a rich family saw the handsome Narharianand and fell in love with and longed to marry him. When Swamiji heard this, he sent the boy away to Alopi Baug in Prayag for completing the rituals of four sacred months 'Chaturmasa*'. There he started staying in a small cottage. Later, he went to Chitrakoot. He never stayed at one place for long. Just when he was at Purushotam Puri completing his sacred performances of Chaturmasa, Shri. Vijay Bahadur Singh, the Thakur of Ghatkala invited him to Rajasthan. There, he spread the cult for devotion to Lord Rama. In his old days, he came to Chitrakoot and spent rest of his life there. Swami Ramananda had already told Acharya Anantananda before giving him diksha, that this boy had come to this world like any other committed sages to accomplish 'dharma' - performance according to moral values for the sake of the country and to save humanity. He and his cherished disciple Goswami Tulsidas will continue to liberate the world from miseries even after our life."

Swamiji had a special liking for Rajasthan. He believed that as there were royal palaces in Rajasthan, the anti-religious elements would not have much effect over there. Besides, these kings only would be able to stop the rebellious and aimless blind religiousity which was then taking hold of the mind of the people. Therefore, he instructed Acharya Anantananda to give priority to giving discipleship to those coming from Rajasthan with an urge to be a disciple. Once a youth from Banswada came named Yagnesh Dutt. He was studying law and staying in Kashi. He came to Swami Ramananda. He had an inborn inclination towards 'yoga vidya'. He had almost reached the state of Sidhatha - accomplishment. He used to cross, the Ganga on siddhasan*. He had married there, however was under great influence of Swamiji and had an earnest desire to accept the life of renounciation. One day when he was to to to the bank of the Ganga, he told his wife that he would not be coming back. She took it lightly and waited for him the whole day. Later, she took his word to be true and collapsed. When Yagnesh Dutt returned home in the evening, he found his wife dead. He became very sad. He did her funeral rituals and realising that he was left with no other support, he surrendered himself to Swami Ramananda and requested him to accept him as his disciple. Swamiji granted his prayer on the condition that he would have to stand on one

leg for one hour. Yagnesh Dutt followed his instruction and stood on one leg. At the end when he lost balance, Acharya Anantananda saved him from falling. Swamiji made Yagnesh Dutt a disciple but he added, "It was Anantananda who saved you, therefore you have to regard him as your first guru." Anantananda made him aware of the consciousness of Ramanama woven with Shabda - Surati - Yoga, and gave him the name "Yoganand". Swamiji directed Anantananda to go to Rajasthan and have disciples there. Acharya Anantananda later took seven Siddha disciples amongst whom were Krishna Payahari, Karmachand, and Sriramdas. These disciples of Rajasthan propagated the Shabda-Surati-Yoga woven with Rama nam at several places.

Swami Ramananda was watching that atrocities on the Hindus were on the increase. Religious conversions were going on everywhere. The downtrodden and cheated people were threatened and distracted from following dharma. Once he summoned Kabirdas and Raidas, and said, "It is the time when there is a dire need for a Guru in the community. There is great arrogance among the "Gurus" of the higher classes. They do not have concern for the country. They have forgotten the moral laws of this century. It is now time to unify the world by the devoted saints. You two should work for uniting unifying the people. Devotion to Rama with Surati Shabda is the easiest way which will work miracle at this time." Conforming to this advice, they both set on to travel to villages after villages and towns after towns and taught the devotion for Lord Rama - the easiest way for the downtrodden, the cheated and the weak. Both set out in different directions and propagated the message of dharma. This was the beginning of Swami Ramananda's message reaching the world outside the hermitage. The tradition to worship Rama with Sita and Lakshman continued in the society for a long time.



Six

Hearing about Swami Ramananda, the saviour of religion and society, Shri Gajasimha, felt encouraged, and saw a hope of ray, and came to see him. Gajasimha was the nephew of Raja Shriharisimha Dev of the Surya Dynasty of Ayodhya He came to Swamiji and reported about the atrocities and their sufferings. "The King of Ayodhya Shri Narsimha scared of the terrifying atrocities of Juna Khan Tughlaq, renounced the world and went to a forest for spiritual invocation in solitude. During his absence, I have taken the reins of the kingdom. However Tughlaq defeated me by a mighty force and brought Ayodhya city under his tyranny. He forcibly converted me to Islam. He converted twenty thousand Hindus as well. Whoever refused to against accept Islam, were brutally killed. He is a staunch enemy of cows and brahmins. Wherever he saw one, he killed them. In this critical situation, I am helpless and unable to find out a solution. Whichever pundits we approached to take refuge, all of them forsook us. We have been forbidden to come back to our own religion. Gurudev, you have embraced all. Knowing about your greatness, I am surrendering to you. We all desire to become Hindus once again. It is only you who can save the 'dev nagari' (the city of deities) Ayodhya, its royal family and the people who are devotees of Ram. Hearing this sad episode from Gajasimha Dev, Swamiji summoned his courage and said in a consoling tone, "We shall soon come to Ayodhya with my disciples. Thereafter on your taking bath in the Sarayu river, we shall bring back all of you to the sacred Hindu Religion."

On the pre-determined day, the saint and the saviour of the country's culture, Swami Ramananda with his group of disciples, for the first time came out of his abode in order to protect the sacred religion. As he reached Ayodhya, the crowd of people, eager to come back to their own religion, raised slogans in praise of Swami Ramananda, reverberating the sky, and welcomed him with garlands. The reception was so grand that the lifeless Hindus seemed to have a risen and enlivened. At the holy command of Swamiji, all the people who wanted to be converted back, reached the Sarayu river and had a dip together. That time Swamiji blew his heavenly

conch. When the men got out of the water, the signs of their circumcision had vanished. The whole atmosphere was filled with joy. Swamiji once again sanctified all of them with Hindu rituals and said, "I have come over here to impress upon the citizens of Ayodhya, which is but my body, that they are not alone in this time of distress. Along with them, not only me but all the material as well as spiritual forces are present both in subtle and real forms. There is no need to be afraid and get converted to other religion. The cultural heredity, the undying wisdom of religion, and the spirituality of this great country, all are present with them. It is this country which has given the world the purest of knowledge. Be assured that very soon this dark night will be over. The sun, the symbol of science and philosophy of India will have a sharp ascent once again. The West, already troubled with materialism will surrender to the spirituality of India, seeking peace." As Swami Ramananda uttered this, clapping of hands exhibited a new strength and enthusiasm. The sky reverberated with the shouts of victory to Swamiji. The sight of their return to their original abode was very enthralling. The banks of the Sarayu echoed with the sounds of victory in praise of Swami Ramananda.

Swamiji and his disciples visited Ram Janma Bhuumi (birth place of Rama), Kanak Bhavan etc. and also addressed the people. Then they returned to Kashi. Swamiji's bold venture and his divine yogic power was the talk at every corner of Kashi. Swamiji turned from 'Diksha Guru' (Guru granting sanctifying purity to proceed on the path of spirituality) to 'Dharmoddharak Guru' (a saviour Guru who rejuvenates Religion).

After this event, another miracle took place. In the month of Shravan*, a mammoth religious gathering was organised. Experts and religious leaders from distant places attended in the sacred town. After performing the religious rituals, the present situation made all the dignitaries to ponder on the burning problems of the country. They dwelt on the issues of immoral, shameful atrocities by the administrators of the alien religion. The accepted symbols of the religion, namely yagnopavith* (sacred thread), Tilak (sindur on forehead), tuft, of hair, ornaments etc. were snatched awar and the chastity of respectable women was ravished. It was causing the blood to boil. The storm of conversion into Islam was rocking the ship of 'Sanathana Dharma' (ancient Hindu Religion). Religious scriptures were being burnt. The idols in the temples were being destroyed. The Hindutva was grief-stricken. The lifestyle was turning from bad to worse. All raised their voice against this situation, but the helpless, peace loving people of the society

could not withstand the cruelty of the military regime. The rulers of the small kingdoms were nursing rivalry against one another, they could not face the situation. Disappointed and defeated, the rulers sacrificed their crowns and placed them at the feet of the victors. How can dharma (religion) survive? How can our culture be saved? How can we save our heavenly land which was becoming a hell? How can we maintain and protect our eternal religion? All the experts present there gave vent to their feelings, but they were helpless against the forces of the army. Finally they agreed upon one decision - to meet Swami Ramananda Acharya, the redeemer and the country's greatest yogi. They would submit to him the reports of the suffering experienced by the country and the people and seek his advice. He had recently exhibited a triumphant performance of reconverting twenty thousand Hindus back to their original religion. This was registered as an immensely significant and unique event in the history.

A representative group of the exponents of all the communities from all parts of the country carried this noble cause to Shrimath. On their arrival they were properly welcomed. Acharya Anantananda had already made arrangements for their comfortable stay. All of them presented their miserable tales about the hardships caused to society to Swami Ramananda. They prayed that only he could save the country and the religion. Only he could drive away the clouds of threat to the country. "We have come to your refuge with great hope". Hearing this, Swami Ramananda said from behind the curtain, "Be bold the time has come when exalted liberated souls have been taking birth in this world. Have faith in that great power which loves for this country. It has already made some plans which are laid in all places. All I have to tell you is that you should discard your mean selfishness, narrow-mindedness and the hatred for one another and work for the reconstruction of a united and harmonious society with mutual co-operation. Hindu society can face this threat successfully only if they are united, not divided." The representative group, relieved and happy with Swamiji's words took leave after receiving due hospitality from Acharya Anantananda.

Swamiji performed another miracle that night. Early morning, when the Moulavis (the Muslim priests) went to the top of mosques to proclaim the time of namaaz (the prayer), their throats got stuck. No sound could come out. This event shook not only Kashi, but the tremors reached upto Delhi. Syed and Sheikh, Mullah and Momin (Muslim religious representatives) were dumbfounded. It was a talk of the whole country.

Wherever two Muslims met, they talked only about this. The moulavis of Ibnanur and Meerut sat together and debated on this. They concluded that this was the design of some Hindu liberated saint. Since the incident took place in Kashi, everyone's attention was focused on Swami Ramananda at Shrimath. Neated debates took place in the mosques. "Kill them, destroy them" were the slogans booming, but no one had the courage to enter Shrimath which occupied five square kilometers of space and housed twenty five thousand disciples of Swamiji. It was decided that first they would meet Kabir Das, the disciple of Swami Ramananda. So, some prominent people from the mosque reached Kabir Das's residence with valuable gifts. Kabir refused the gifts, however listened to their humble, polite request and wish and only agreed to accompany them and arrange for a meeting with Swami Ramananda. On their way, Kabir Das said this much, "The Badshah (ruler) has lighted fire in the water. He has disturbed a sleeping lion; what can I do? This is not in my capacity." In answer to this, one of the accompanying moulavis said, "Whatever command Swamiji gives, we will try to carry them out by convincing our Badshah. We want to live together and we want to die together. Without your help, it is impossible." On this, Kabir Das sharply retorted, "Living in Hindustan, you are acting against the Hindus and cause atrocities against them. You are causing a lot of hardships in their life. Our co-operation and your oppressions cannot go together." The Muslim leader was speechless. By this time they had reached Shrimath.

Swamiji was to be an omniscient saint. What could be hidden from him? Even before Kabir entered the hermitage with the group, Swamiji blew his conch from within his cave. No sooner did they hear it, than the representatives were enthralled. Kabir told the leader of the group in a low tone, "Whatever Swamiji says, accept it without comment. That will be good for everyone." They replied in the same tone, "Yes, we are willing." Kabir stood in front of the cave-door and politely announced the arrival of representatives of Muslims, who had come to meet him. Swamiji said from behind the curtain, "There is only one God for the whole universe. All the religions speak about attaining that Lord of the Universe. Everyone's destination is the same. Behold the truth that the Almighty makes no discrimination. He showers his rain of mercy on all in the same manner. All the discriminations are our creation. We are fighting amongst ourselves without any meaning. We kill one another. This is not right. The whole universe has its origin in that Great Soul (Paramatma). We all have the right to worship him. Our bodies are the means for that purpose. He resides in

all of us and we are all in him. He is not only for you, he is for everyone. Then why should you put hurdles in the religious practices of others? He is the One, we call Him by different names. He does not differentiate between the peoples, then why do we maintain it? All have the right to lead their lives as per their liking. Why should you be so fanatic as to cause difficulties for others? Your Badshah is knowingly committing atrocities on the Hindus. How can he get happiness and pleasure by putting others in trouble? The Lord Almighty is watching all these. None can hide anything from Him." Listening to the discourse of Swamiji, the leader of the representatives said, "Your advice is acceptable to us. We will convey your advice in full to our Badshah and try to convince him. Please have mercy on us."

Swamiji continued, "Listen, when everyone has the right to worship that Supreme Lord, why should there be cruelty towards the Hindus? Just like you are building mosques, the Hindus should have the freedom to build temples. Why should temple - building be a danger for you? Is there any difference in the lime and the bricks used in buildings temples and mosques? There is one Creator; but to get to Him there are many ways. To attain Him, all should have freedom. Why should there be forceful conversion? Why the faith of the Hindus is being suppressed? Killing cows should be stopped immediately. Why should the religious books of the Hindus be set on fire? Their religious books guide the people to follow the right path, and save them from evils. There should be an end to burning them. Atrocities committed by an authority have a limit. Power is being misused by the Muslims to forcibly molest Hindu women. They are kidnapping our women. If a chastity of a woman is not respected how can the society progress? Women's piety in this country is being destroyed. This should be stopped. From early days all the religions, all the castes and communities have equal opportunities and equal dignity in this country. When a king's son can sit on a horse, why not the son of a Harijan? Why should the latter be asked to get down? In the eyes of the Almighty, all are equal. Then why should there be differences? Why should he not be allowed to ride on a horse in front of a mosque? Blowing a conch is an integral part of the worship in Hindu society. Why should there be prohibition blowing the conch? During some seasons like Kumbha, a tax is being imposed on the pilgrims when they visit holy places. During Muharram, others are not allowed to conduct festivals. Is it that you alone are the superiors? Is there no identity left for others? You have put a ban on singing hymns. You have banned celebration of festivals in some

months. All the freedom of the Hindus are taken away. They are the original inhabitants here, and they are larger in number. They have their ancient culture. They have their own religious books. They have their own way of meditation. Is it proper to treat those as false? Is it correct to burn and to wound them? A king's duty is to keep his subjects happy and comfortable. Then is why this large number of people being subjected to torture and miseries? Remember, by giving suffering to others, you can never be happy.

Now, you present my thoughts to your Badshah Gayasudin Tughlaq and get them approved by him in writing and then announce it to the public. God Almighty will certainly remove all your obstacles."

All the representative mullahs and moulavis of the Muslim society found Swamiji's words true and acceptable. They promised to get a royal declaration made by the Badshah. Then they bade farewell. Kabir led them upto the exit door.

These Muslim representatives met the Badshah in Delhi and reported about all the demands made by Swamiji. The Badshah took the advice positively and issued suitable orders. Immediately there started arising the sounds of drums erupted in every village of the region. Everywhere the atmosphere was full of joy. Everywhere people praised Swami Ramananda for his magnificent role as the saviour of the religion and raised slogans praising him. Swamiji's glory got enhanced as the reformer saint of the century. Moulavis started their 'ajan' worship as directed and namaz resumed in the mosques. The Muslims regarded Swami Ramananda as a rare person and started praising him as a great saint, who preached communal harmony. Since then both societies lived peacefully in a friendly manner. They followed their respective religions and traditions harmoniously.

The great sufi saint Khwaja Nijanumuddin Aualiya of Delhi praised Swami Ramananda for the great peace-making he had performed. He sent a note through his disciple, the poet Khusru to Swami Ramananda. The letter was so fabulously decorated with jasmine buds that it almost covered the written contents in it. Even the alphabets were made of the jasmine buds. The following quotation from the sacred Quran were inscribed in the letter: "Illah bajikra Allah thatts mainul kuloof", meaning; "Remembrance of God alone will bring peace for the soul". The poet Khusru went to Srimath and sent the letter through Acharya Anantananda to the Swamiji seated in his cave. Swamiji did not respond for a long time. Then the poet Khusru read out a poem in praise of Swamiji. It had the initial passage in

Parsian and the second part in Hindi. This poem had compared Swamiji's mercy as his sweetheart for whom he has a deep love. No sooner the poem was concluded, the sound of conch echoed and the curtain raised. Khusru's eyes gleamed at the sight of the brilliant appearance. He also experienced a soothing bliss and internal peace. At that time, a small bird with a twig of grass in its beak entered the cave and started flying in a circular motion. Then it placed the twig at the door frame. Swamiji took it and sprinkled some holy water on it. The bird received the water on its head and flew away. The bird was none other than Khwaja Saheb. On the second day, there were discussions in Kashi about this incident. Swamiji's divinity was being praised everywhere. From then onward, Swamiji was worshipped by both the Hindus and the Muslims alike.

The episodes reached far to the western part of the country. One day a woman called Fathima, who was a disciple of a spiritual saint Yaseen, came to Swamiji. The 'satsang' was about to begin. She sat silently in one corner leaning on a wall. At that time, a large number of devotees had assembled in the enclave. They saw her and started asking her questions after question, but she never responded. When she was finally compelled, she said only this, "one who knows does not speak, one who speaks does not know". So saying, she was about to leave when some wise people sensing the wisdom in her statement called her back. Once again, she came and sat there silently. After sometime, Swamiji completed his meditation. The bell rang. Then Acharya Anantananda came to Fathima and asked, "Do you want to meet Swamiji?" On this, she noded her head in assent. Acharya Anantananda went to Swamiji and told him about that woman. Swamiji immediately parted the curtain and came out. Seeing his divine vision, a blissful energy spread all over Fathima's soul and body. She managed to get up and placed her head at the feet of Swamiji. She said, "My revered teacher Yaseen has sent me here to serve you. He needs the dust of your lotus feet to experience the blissful knowledge of ultimate renounciation. He will make surma (the powder to put into eyes which improves vision and beauty of the eyes) with it to get the divine vision. I have heard about your glory much earlier. My mind was eagerly longing to have your vision. Therefore, I took it as my sacred task to carry out the directions of my Master Yaseen. By beholding your radiant vision my wish has been fulfilled. I travelled all this distance in disguise. Please shower your mercy on me too. My revered master always is engrossed completely in the recitals of praises of the Lord Almighty in his mind, by action and speech."

Swamiji listened to Fathima in rapt attention. He said, "Many saints from this country have gone to your place. They are already propagating the greatness of our culture."

"No other saint in the world has attained the spiritual magnanimity that you have. You have that divine power with which, just sitting in that small cave, you could take the practitioner upto the fourth level of spiritual knowledge. You are without a parallel. There is no match for you. If the western saints had attained the power as you have, then why should my master Yaseen send me all the way here?"

"Your Master is certainly a noble sage, that is why he is granting me this honour. Please give him a message that I will reach there before the last day of Ramzan* and fulfill his desire."

"Your kindness will not only favour my teacher but the entire western region. We will be eagerly awaiting for you. Let me take leave with your permission." so saying, Fathima touched his feet and said farewell.

"Anantananda, please see her upto the gate with all honour." All the devotees who had come to attend the discourse admired her, but their curious looks obviously noticed the event.

Once a rich youth named Namavar from a country named Asarar in the West came to Srimath with a desire to satiate his thirst of knowledge. He was gripped with a desire to know about the ultimate truth. He was just an adolescent; even his moustache and beard were yet to appear. He came riding a horse. He was a serene, Sanskrit speaking youth, obsessed by the compete devotion to the Almighty. He was truthful, he slept on the floor, ate roti made of barley. Coming to the Srimath, he asked Acharya Anantananda, "Can I see Swamiji?" Acharya Anantananda replied, "Now you cannot, but you can certainly hear the sound of his conch." On this, he said, "I am somewhat anxious. I need answers to my doubts." Acharya Anantananda said, "You may attend the meditation discourses and satisfy your curiosity about the Ultimate Truth." On this, he said, "Alright, that is enough". He waited. After completing the meditation, Swamiji blew the conch. Listening the sound of the conch Namvar went through a long spell of bliss. He fell unconscious. It was a state of tranquility. After a long spell he regained consciousness. He was a poet with an ability to swiftly compose verses. Swamiji was preparing to come to the place of discourse, during which the youth composed a couple of verses praising Swamiji and the sound of the conch and had quick practice to recite them in melodious

tunes. As soon as Swamiji sat for his discourse, the youth stood up and greeted Swamiji with the verses he had composed in Sanskrit. Swamiji was overjoyed to hear the compositions in Sanskrit - the language of deities, from a person belonging to another country. Swamiji asked him in Sanskrit, "Who are you? Where do you come from? How did you come here?" On this, Namvar replied in Sanskrit and introduced himself, "I have some doubts in my mind, for which I need answers."

"Ask", (the conversation was in Sanskrit).

"Swamiji, what is the easiest way to get unitied with the Creator - the Paramatma, the Supreme Lord?"

"Pure love. Also Surati Shabda woven with Rama - nama chanting. This practice has been introduced by this hermitage."

"Swamiji, where is this technique practised?"

"All over this country, especially in the northern part."

"Is it possible that the shower of your mercy will fall on this poor person? I wish to achieve that exclusive solitude (oneness) in your presence"

"Why not? The doors of this hermitage are always open for such seekers. No one has ever returned from here disappointed."

On hearing this, Namavar got up and touched Swamiji's feet. "Now onwards my being is in your refuge."

"Continue to attend the discourses. Sit throughout. All will be cleared slowly. Every one has the right to see the Almighty. A correct master is one who does not hide the knowledge he has gained, packed in a sack as a miser does with money."

Knowledge is sacred. Hence it is imperative that society should understand it, follow it and always put it into practice and make one's life fruitful.

Namavar liked this spiritually rich country so much that even after acquiring self-realisation, he did not return to his own country, Asarar. He remained in Kashi. He used to declare, 'There is no other country like India. Here, God is with the devotee and the devotee is always with God."

In the evening, Swamiji said in his discourse, "Today the clouds have gathered over the tradition of deep renunciation. The reason is clear. The prevailing circumstances have become very frightening and difficult.

Whatever knowledge the country possessed has become vulnerable to the destructive forces. It is becoming very difficult to preserve the knowledge. There appears to be no scope for new inventive thinking, but even in this difficult situation, there is no need to lose hope. Today, Shrimath has taken on its shoulders the responsibility of keeping intact our culture and spiritual knowledge. Shrimath has called back even the converted people. Shrimath has made the irreligious tyrants to become conscious and cautious of their deeds and has made them stop the atrocities that are committed against the Hindus. The hermitage has brought opportunity for women who could lead their life with full freedom. Shrimath also has worked for the unity and strength of the downtrodden, the cheated, the weak and the destitutes by bringing them back to society's mainstream. They have been given respectable and equal status. Unity and equality are been established. The lost self-confidence has been reinstated.

Shrimath has taken constructive steps, not destructive. It has taken efforts to remove hatred and generate love, affection, good relationship and spiritual feelings in order to bring everyone to the same forum. The obvious proof is your presence here.

Lord Ram is present in all and He is the worthiest to be worshipped. He is existing in the minds of all of us. Shrimath has proved this point to all of you who are here. We have awakened the limitless consciousness in you and brought you all very near to Lord Ram. Intensity of concern is the foundation of success. Faith are its stairs, conscience is its pace. A scripture has been founded to reach the summit by fighting with the obstructions, conquering the tasks by adopting the given knowledge with conscience, concern and faith. Shrimath has laid many such foundation stones. Proceed on the glorious way shown by Shrimath. My blessings are always with you. The success is eagerly waiting for you to kiss your feet."



Seven

There was one more grave question which Swami Ramananda thought, that would have to be taken on anvil on priority and it was to bind the country's various customs and traditions under one code and bring them on a culturally rich patriotic platform. One proposition came up and that was of pilgrimages, however the senior sages opined that first a book be prepared with a focus to establish a mutual respect in all the sects which would help finding solutions to the disputes arising out of petty differences. The saints of our country who are engaged in co-coordinating the people would also be able to get knowledgeable guidance from that book and will be confidently present our philosophy in proper perspective. All the participants had elaborate debate and discussions on this subject with Swamiji. Finally, it was decided that a spiritual book "Anand Bhashya" be prepared which would represent the Hindu Philosophy with essence of the Vedas, Upanishads, the Gita* and the Brahma-sutra. All requested that Swamiji himself should write the book. Within a short time, Swamiji completed "Anand Bhashya". He then read it out first to his first disciple, Acharya Anantananda, with necessary explanations. Both of them discussed in depth every chapter of the book. While clearing the doubts, Swamiji said, "In the critical evaluation of the various sutras, I have given importance to the approach which would be acceptable to all, as was followed by Maharshi Veda Vyasa."

When Ananda Bhashya was released, agitations erupted not only amongst the Vaishnavas but also amongst the Shaivas and the Shaktas. Debates were held. When the religious leaders of all sects came to take bath in the Ganga on the day of eclipse, a huge gathering in which every one gave his own opinion on the principles laid down in the Anand Bhashya. The Vishishthadwaiti representatives were answering skillfully and serenely to all the doubts, confusions and objections, but who was willing to accept? They were making mountains out of molehills. There was no attempt to think about the need of standing upright with the united power of equality, coordination and accord. Each was playing his own tune on his own instrument. No one was ready to consider seriously

about the fact that all incarnations, all achievers and all thinkers have professed the same spiritual knowledge. Shameful incidents, even bloodshed occurred in this gathering. At last some wise men said, "why not approach the author of the book himself when he is available in Kashi? Isn't it proper to approach that great philosopher and receive his responses to clear all our doubts?" All agreed and the spiritual leaders of all sects were eager in the hearts to have the distinguished sight of Swamiji.

When the news that a representation of the spiritual leaders were to arrive at the Shrimath taking all the debates arising out of the Ananda Bhashya, Swamiji made necessary arrangements to receive them at the entrance of his cave. As they arrived, the curtain of the cave was raised. After the usual courtesies, Swamiji listened to the fearful facts from the spiritual leaders, patiently and gravely. After listening, Swamiji explained the purpose of all the opinions and views and pointed out the differences therein. He said, "I have presented the same principle in Ananda Bhashya which had been held by the ancient sage Veda Vyasa." On this, one of the exponents raised an objection, "How can we trust that the statement made by you and the sage Vyasa are the same?" Swamiji at once meditated and invoked the Sage Veda Vyasa. Suddenly was heard the voice of Sage Vyasa, "The message worded by Shri. Ramananda, is the manifestation of my own views. He has chosen not to criticize any religion and treated all of them on equal status, which is the need of the hour. When you subdue all internal disputes and give serious thought to the present situation, you will realise the truth in the Ananda Bhashya beyond all doubts" and the voice went off. Listening to the voice, all the saints were convinced about the authenticity of the Ananda Bhashya and raised slogans praising Swamiji.

After touching Swamiji's feet, all the holy men left the place. The event had a great inspirational effect on the disciples of Shrimath, who had joined recently. They sat by the side of Acharya Anantananda and started studying Ananda Bhashya meticulously. They started comprehending the hidden principles by their heart.

There was peace and harmony in Kashi, however the widely spread Pashupathya, Lingayats and the Virashaiva sects in the country were taking an offensive stance. Among them, the worshippers of Kamarup, Chamunda, Kapali, Bhairavi and the Vamachari, Tamasi followers were predominant. They assembled in Kashi in groups and came to the hermitage along with drunken Bhairavis. They started shouting and creating chaos.

Hearing the commotion, the curtain parted and Swamiji came out. Immediately, at Swamiji's sight the Bhairavis stood like stone statues. Then, all the sages, celibates, disciples and servants came running. They drove the miscreants by beating and pushing them away from the hermitage. The disciples lifted the stony Bhairavas and beat them on their heads. Frightened, all the Vamanacharis fled from the scene. After they left, on the instructions of Swamiji, Acharya Anantananda cleaned and purified the area of the hermitage with holy waters of the Ganga. He advised everyone to sit peacefully.

Swami Ramanand believed in harmony and coordination. Never did he indulge in revengeful actions. He said only this - "In the south, since many years, there have been conflicts between the Shaivas and the Vaishnavas (worshippers of Shiva and Vishnu respectively). In India, the Shaivas are spread all over since long ago. They were larger in number. The sufferers, distressed Vaishnavas took shelter in North India where they started meditation and invoked Lord Vishnu. Even in North India, the unethical wayward lifestyle was unbridled. They were not ashamed of their immoral lifestyle. They had no regard for the pride of their nation. When there was a need to maintain coordination, they sowed seeds of hatred. When unity was required, they indulged in hostilities and got divided. I will have to tell Kalabhairava about this. He will set them right."

There was nothing, in Ananda Bhashya which could cause hatred amongst people. The jealousy at the increasing popularity of Swami Ramananda gave rise to the feeling of hostilities. This feeling reached upto the Vaishnavas of the south and incited them. Some of the facts given in Ananda Bhashya irritated one Vedic scholar so much that in a rage he marched towards Shrimath and took a challenging stance. Swamiji purposely did not care to see him for three days. Swamiji was surprised and sad that one who had churned thoroughly the Upanishadas should question the Ananda Bhashya. On the fourth day, as the Vedic scholar was reciting the verses of the Samaveda in his sweet and melodious tone, Swamiji felt pity for him. Swamiji was an embodiment of patience. He came out of the curtain, made the Vedic scholar seat by his side with all honour. He then enquired about the purpose of his visit. The Vedic scholar was gratified at the divine appearance of Swamiji. The Vedic scholar, thirsting for the sweet divine knowledge, asked with humility and sincerity, 'Swamiji, when I dwell on the holy scriptures where it has been stated that the 'Shruti' (the divine knowledge which has directly been heard from the

space and has no known author) was created and entered into the material world; it has become the material truth. When I think over this statement I find my mind inadequate to grasp its meaning. I fail to comprehend anything. Please be kind enough to explain to me the mystery of this 'Shruti'. Similarly 'Shruti' is said to have body as well as spiritual symptoms, which I fail to understand. It has been stated that Nityatva, Dharayatva and Sheshtva are the bodily symptoms and Niyamakatva, Dharakatva and Shoshatva are the spiritual symptoms. This also is beyond my ability of comprehension. Only a highly enlightened sage like you will be able to dispel my doubts. And this is the purpose of my visit here. Swamiji replied, "The intellect which is polluted by condemning others will not be capable of comprehension. Let me first drive out the corruption of your intellect. Shed your ego and chanting the name of Ram, become one with me. Only after removing the corrupt part, the rest can be saved." Saying thus, Swamiji blew his conch. Tears of joy from the eyes of the Vedic scholar started flowing. Filled with joy, he was beside himself and began rolling on the floor. An upsurge of Rama nama started flowing from his lips. Rolling, chanting the Rama Nama he went into a deep trance. For a long time Swamiji kept him in the 'samadhi' state. Finally he splashed holy water on him and the Vedic scholar opened his eyes slowly, with purity and wisdom, he stood up. "You have made me understand the meaning of Shruti, without using words." So saying, the scholar fell on Swamiji's feet. Swamiji raised him and said, "Brahma is devoid of any qualities. It is beyond Nature's three qualities. The devotees have clad him with qualities. And these qualities only tell his devotees about the existence of the non-qualitative existence as well as an unimaginable existence beyond that. The study of philosophy should be undertaken with a serene mind and with a desire for the welfare of others. Knowledge is within reach only when one deeply thinks on Vedanta with a mind disposed to justice." Listening to this, the Vedic scholar experienced overwhelming joy. He said, holding Swamiji's feet, "Swamiji please take me to that state of experience where the Brahma is altogether different from either Vishvanug and the Vishvatig. Hearing this, the kind-hearted Swamiji sprinkled water on him and blew his conch. Immediately, again the scholar went into trance. There he saw the Supreme Lord, the deities and the sages. Seeing that divine sight, his doubting material mind got dissolved into his real Self. As he was reviving from meditation, the scholar who appeared immersed in joy, began to shed tears at the feet of Swamiji.

After Ananda Bhashya, Swamiji took over the typical analysis of 'Isha tatva*'. Experts from different religions began to visit Swamiji with a volley of difficult questions, needing answers to them. For nine long months, one Jain saint and one Advaita follower were engrossed in an analysis of "Paramahansa Parama tatva", but could not arrive at any conclusion. Hearing about the supremacy over the spiritual sciences of Swami Ramananda, both of them came to see Swamiji. Nothing could be hidden from Swamiji. He was timeless and all-knowing. Acharya Anantananda made the guests sit on the wooden seats at the entrance of the cave. Suddenly the Jain muni found himself transformed from state of Jivatva* to the state of jinatva* and the Vedanti from the state of 'Anu*' to that of 'Vibhu*'. All the turmoil, doubts and questions they had became satisfied. As soon as the curtain parted than both of them put their heads on the threshold of the cave. Swamiji said, 'Jinacharya, the enlightened person, after the end of his material existence becomes equivalent to God. The Vedantis regard the life liberated from the material would and the disembodied life as Brahman. Where is the difference? The rationale is the creation of Gautami school of thought. The seekers of ultimate knowledge should refrain from debate. Jain munis in their enlightened material state can behold the nine essences of organism and non-organism whereas the enlightened Vedanti beholds the same essence everywhere. Jains get freed from the 'Karma Mudgal" and there the enlightened Vedanti gets freed from illusionary grids. Learned should never fight on the petty differences of words and terminologies. Munis and enlightened sages must understand this and proceed accordingly. Non-violence is the pure form of Narayana - the Supreme God."

Listening to such an explanation which was delivered with clarity and integrated fundamentals, both of them were doubtlessly satisfied. They touched the feet of Swamiji and left confended. Such redressals with a deep sense of coordination, laid the foundation of social unity. Before going on a journey for accomplishment of protection of religion, Swamiji displayed various such eye-opening events and brought the people to have trust in faith and devotion.

Once, a devotional singer and saint belonging to Nimbark community was on his a long pilgrimage. He reached Kashi one day. When everyone was asleep at night, his Guru appeared in his dream and said, 'Having come to Kashi, don't forget to see Swami Ramananda at Shrimath. He is a living divine spirit. On your request, he will bring to the fore the

realization of Brahman for you and make your grief-stricken life meaningful." The saint could not sleep whole night. In the morning, as soon as he finished his morning rituals, he straightway reached the Shrimath. The same Guru had already sent a message to Swamiji. As he reached there, the curtain parted and Swamiji came out and appeared before the saint. The Nimbark saint saw Swamiji and froze in wondrous astonishment. His joy knew no bounds when he saw Swami Ramananda occupying the Brahma Throne. As instructed by his guru, the saint put his head at the feet of Swamiji. He saw that Swamiji was dancing in the company of gopis (the women folk who danced around Lord Krishna) in the lanes of Vrindavan. Sweet tune of a flute wafted through the creepers. Seeing such a spectacular vision, the Nimbark saint reached the peak of joy. Instantly, Sri Krishna took him by his hand to participate in the cheerful dance. Seeing Swamiji in the form of Shri Krishna, the Nimbark saint found no difference between Rama and Krishna. Totally immersed in the blissful vision, the saint was tasting the nectar of spirituality.

Suddenly, the curtain of the cave got pulled away. The Nimbark Saint came back to reality. A voice came from behind - 'Babaji, did you achieve what your Guru had told you? Do you desire to see anything else?"

Tears of love were flowing from Nimbark saint's eyes. 'You are the real Brahman. Your divine vision was so bright that all the darkness and desires in my mind is driven away. You have made my life fulfilled." So saying, Nimbark saint tonehed his forehead on the doorframe of the cave.

He said, "Today, I understand that there is no difference at all between Guru and Govind. You have got me immersed in the nectar of spirituality. I desire that I may be allowed to be here for a few days. Please grant my prayer."

"The Shrimath is always open for the God's devotees. You can stay here as long as you want. Keep attending the satsang." When the Nimbark saint stood up, Acharya Anantananda accompanied him upto the exit door doing him all honour.

Swami Ramananda was committed to portray himself as a strong spiritual power of this country. He never wanted that the Advaita philosophers should fight amongst each other and lose their energy and bring disaster to the country. He did not like the situation of mutual hatred being created between separate groups whose aim and principles were in

fact the same. Taking the famous statements, "Brahma Satya Jagat Mithya*" by Aadi Sankaracharya, there was fierce fighting amongst the five sects of the Vaishnavas. There was no peaceful, harmonious environment. These five sects had been at loggerheads with the Shaivas since long. Shaivas dominated in the south. Sio, the Advait followers were proceeding to the north. There was of course some powerful Shaivas in north, but they were not so close minded.

The fragrance of Swamiji's fame for harmony was spreading to the southern part at great speed. This fragrance deeply influenced the disposition of the heads of five Vaishnava community of the South. They were caught in the heavy storm of forceful debates. They were arrogant about their honesty, greatness and integrity. No one was prepared to yield. The fragrance of Shrimath of Swamiji reached the famous Veda exponent of the South, Shri Bhauji Shastri. He called the leaders of those five communities and said, "Why not we all go to Kashi and get these confusions clarified by Swami Ramananda, who is the respected Godlike saint, most religious and a great authority in philosophy?" Shri Bhauji Shastri considered the internal disputes and debates as the greatest obstacle in the promotion and propagation of philosophy. He was a great thinker. Going from one ashram to another, he put forward his views. Everyone offered their cooperation. He went to Kashi taking along with him prominent experts and supporters of Advaita, Visishthadwaita, Shuddhadwaita, Dwaitadwaita and Dwaita schools. All the five factions were opponents. Everyone considered himself greater than other. When they reached the hermitage, all wanted a permanent solution for their dispute.

When the five strong-headed intellectuals reached the hermitage, Swamiji was in his evening meditation. So they sat on the wooden seats kept at the entrance of the cave. Acharya Anantananda served them light refreshments. After completing the meditation, the curtain parted. A glorious illumination dazzled everyone's eyes.

After the formalities, Pundit Bhau Shastri presented in detail the purpose of their visit to Shrimath. He introduced himself first as propagator of Vedanta (philosophy) in South and introduced the other five. He said, "Swamiji, there is a dire need for unifying the five Vaishnav factions of the South. The real meaning of philosophy should be placed in front of the society. The debates on petty matters should be stopped. We therefore wish to take your advice. Swamiji said, 'I see that this is not a philosophical

debate but only a debate on definitions and terminologies, which is a mere play on words. On the background of these disputes there are those eleven supreme authors who have made their definition of the only rule i.e. the Principle of Brahman. No doubt the intelligence of all of you has been displayed brilliantly, however you may not know what damage has been done to the religion and to the society. Advaita is that great knowledge in Indian Philosophy and whoever came later had to accept its superiority. In fact, though we are accepting it, typically we are trying to reject it. You all are great exponents of Sanskrit. Not only have you mastered the Brahmasutra but the philosophy in our Upanishads and ShrimadBhagwat Gita also has not escaped your study. You have recited them several times. All these scriptures are the foundations of Advaita Vedanta. Knowledge is before us. Meaningless is our debate, isn't it? If I assert, you may not agree because I consider myself as one of you. So let me invite those eleven original authors. I shall call the author of the Brahma Sutra the great Sage Badarayan too. Let the truth be established.

When Swamiji took his meditative posture and invoked them, all those eleven authors and the saint Badarayan, made their appearance. Introducing them, Swamiji said, "In the middle, sage Badarayan, the author of the Brahmasutra is sitting. On his right side, the author of Sariraka Bhashya - Shree Shankar. In front of Vyas, his son - Shukadev who has written 'Vedanta Sara Mimansa Bhashya' is seated. On his left, is Vigyan Bhikshu, who is the author of the original Vishishthadwaita. In the second row, the preacher of Vishishtadwaita, the author of 'Shri Bhashya, Sri Lakshmanacharya. Next to Shukadev, the dwaita pratipadak (preacher of dwaita) and author of 'Brahma sutra Bhashya', Shri. Bhaskaracharya. There is the author of 'Srikar Bhashya' and expert in Dwaita siddhanta, Acharya Sripati. The next is Madhavacharya, the author of 'Dwaita Bhashya'. Next to him is Vishnuswami who has authored 'Shudhadwaita Parak Bhashya'. Next to him is Shri Nimbarkacharya, the author of 'Vedanta Parijat Sourabha Bhashya', the exponent of Dwaitadwaita. Next to Dhruv is Sayan, who has authored 'Sutrabhashya'. He is the disciple of Saint Bodhayan. His bhashya is considered as a point between Adwaita and Visishtadwaita. All these authors are seated before you. The original author Saint Badarayan also is present here. Who else can get you the solutions for your debates? I will request Shri. Veda Vyas too to present an extract of the great truth here by his grace. That will help these five here to get convincing answers for their questions and realise the essence of Advaita Vedanta. It is very necessary for the religious unity in present times. Vyasji said - 'Logic and analysis are

not confusing only till such time the objective is achieved. Once the objective is achieved all the woven net of the words becomes clear. One has first to determine the subtlest aim in the process of 'sadhana' (penance for accomplishment) and aradhana (invocation). For example when at the time of certain important event so long as people remain standing at the distance, they do not know anything about their aim. When they reach near, the ambiguity gets vanished and what appears is a clear and unique truth. Therefore, one must not get involved in fruitless debate. March towards the aim as per the Guru's directions unhesitatingly. It is the Guru who takes you to your goal. Proceed forward by accepting the Guru's advice with absolute faith. You will be able to achieve the goal and enjoy the bliss of the life. That would be the greatest supreme joy."

When the sage Badarayan finished his explanation, these five great experts remained speechless but very satisfied and happy at the spectacle of the twelve great heavenly guests and praised Swamiji in their emotional voices. Acharya Anantananda bade them farewell honourably. These saints and disciples who were present there, were watching the spectacular demonstration. They too praised Swamiji's efforts towards religious unity with full compliments. They saw in Swamiji a glorified saint of the great, united country.

Muni Pungav was a loyal listener of the satsanga organised by Shri Pachar Swami. He had studied philosophy but he did not reach the secrets of philosophy. His heart was longing to achieve liberation. He made a lot of efforts, but all in vain. He wanted to admit this before Swamiji but because of the crowd and of the curtain placed there, he could not talk to Swamiji in solitude. Swamiji was aware of the thoughts of everyone. He was all-knowing. Psychologically too, he could understand from the gestures of the saint that he had some doubts and because of shyness, he wanted to talk to him in private. Swamiji raised the very topic in the satsang. "Inner soul is the replica of Lord Shiva where the sound of five letters of Shiva are perpetually vibrating. These six great statements are the development of the same six kinds of sounds and these are the worshippers in the temple. These are the great six statements, which tear off the curtain of desire. Only those who are bonded with yoga are able to listen to these sounds. The six unique statements are - He is you, He is yours, He is like you, He is no one but you, You belong to him, You are like him. These are the six sentences, which throw light on the immensity, serenity and the limitless capacity of the human beings. These statements do not

discriminate between man and God. They are the creators of movement formed by Brahman, they are the statements which impart the ultimate knowledge of the philosophy which save the man from the illusion which makes him dance to its tune. By merely listening to these sounds, the living beings have salvation. Each of these great sentences has in it a particular yoga kriya distinguished from each other. Each one is the foothold to take one to liberation. They are the royal paths leading to the Infinite. Practically there is no difference in it; except its direction, which is why six different factions have stood behind each one. To summarise, this six worded mantra only is 'Ram'. While chanting the word 'Ram' all the six kinds of sounds get reverberated. Listening to them the Surati Shabda follower gets his six bodily vices subsided and achieves six heavenly treasures easily. On receiving these six treasures, the sacred flame of enlightenment is kindled in the heart of a seeker. All the material vices get destroyed in the light of this crystal flame and the mind gets dissolved in the supreme joyous power. This is the Vedanta which is endorsed by the Almighty God. He assures the man that he is not different than Him. It is God only who attains Godliness. He has all the potentials, which God possesses."

Pundit Pachar was getting all the explanation for his doubts and curiosities. By the end of the discourse of Swamiji all his doubts which were troubling him during the study of philosophy were getting completely cleared. After the discourse, the satisfied Pundit Pachar bowed at the feet of Swamiji and said, "The Sun of your discourse has cleared the darkness of my mind completely. I am very satisfied. My attending the satsang (religious discourse) was fruitful. You are great, you know the hidden truths. You only can uplift the troubled lives from the materialistic things. You can reform their present and future lives. There is no saint equal to yourself." Pachar left the place loudly declaring his praises of supremacy of the great Saint.

After getting widespread appreciation for Anand Bhashya and the certification given by none other than Maharshi Ved Vyas, Swami Ramananda was regarded as the greatest scholar of the Vedas by prominent pundits in the country. In order to get the solutions for various issues of the Vedas, people from far-off places began to arrive at Shrimath. The participants of all the religious conferences held in Kashi made it a point to visit Shrimath. They did not lose the opportunity to have Swamiji's vision and to have the benefit of spiritual discussions.

On the occasion of a lunar eclipse, a grand religious conference had been organized, and many religious teachers, saints and siddha yogis had arrived from distant places. After the function, all of them took a chance to go to Shrimath and have the fortune of getting the vision of Swamiji. When they came, Swamiji was in meditation. Being disappointed that the vision could not be possible, they returned after enquiring about the convenient time to see him from Acharya Anantananda. The next day, after carrying out the daily religious duties, they reached Shrimath at the appointed time. Among them, the great expert and Vedic scholar, Kshireshwar Bhatt was also there. His mind was very curious to understand the meaning of some verses of the 'Shruti'. It was time for satsang. Swamiji was reading the thoughts of everyone present there, his eyes fell on Kshireswar Bhatt. After reading his inner feelings, Swamiji took that topic for his discourse. He said -

"Cause itself, though of different nature, is the effect. If the reason of death is ignorance, then one must know that it also is the vehicle to go beyond death. Ignorance is dilemmatic. It has endless circulatory dance-like motion. The same melody is played on the boundary of birth and death, which reveals various manifestations like happiness, grief, ecstasy, mourning, good deeds and bad deeds. It is a fact to be contemplated that the same duality is supporting an analogous tune. The equitable view is the one to comprehend it in its dual forms. One who ignores the advice invites death. One who listens, is on his guard. He becomes alert, makes effort and crosses the river of death. The beauty in the form of ignorance plays a melodious tune through its dance - 'It is God who exists everywhere and is in everything'. It is with all. It is He whose manifestation is this mysterious world.

Shri. Kshireshwar Bhatt was listening to the discourse with rapt attention. He was following the inner meaning of each and every word. He was also surprised, how did Swamiji know what was in his mind. He went to Swamiji and said, "I had come here with the very same doubts for which you have given answers without my asking. All my doubts have been dispelled." Saying this, Kshirshwar Bhatt bowed at the feet of Swamiji. Swamiji kept his right hand on his head; instantly the knowledge about all the Vedas dewned on him. Swamiji told him to come again on the following day.

Pundit Kshireshwar Bhatt reached the site of the discourse next day on time. Swamiji continued the discourse from the point where he had ended on the previous day, he continued the discourse -

"It is knowledge that entails immortality. Immortality cannot be achieved without knowledge. Aim of the material life is to use the universal matter, which in fact is achievable also by knowledge. Sacrifice is one of the manifestations of knowledge. Knowledge generates a sprout of sacrifice in the heart of a person adorned with knowledge and modesty. Greatness of sacrifice lies in even abandoning the self from the unquenchable thirst to die on the name and form. Real utility of sacrifice is to sacrifice the fruits of one's actions. One who becomes devoid of desire by using knowledge and becoming one with God can cross over duality. It is this principle which was followed by the seekers who reached the ultimate salvation. They had purified their body and dissolved themselves in the ultimate unique Power. There were many who did it and there will be many who will do it. The sacrificing and renounced person achieves the state devoid of the qualities, by crossing the illusion of the qualities. Attraction of the qualities does not dissuade him. He becomes one with God and achieves the ultimate happiness. The flame of that divine soul is visible everywhere. One, who sees it and marches forward to accomplish his duty, does not discriminate. Doing his duties without discrimination he makes his existence meaningful in the world. Kshireshwar Bhatt had his attention fixed on the discourse, he got lost and reached that stage of non-discrimination where qualities do not exist. He found himself abiding in deep meditation even after the discourse was over.

Swami Ramananda was one of those yogis who was not only a master of sciences, but a master of meditation process leading to the revelation of the ultimate divinity. He propagated the easiest way of Shabda Surati Yoga or the devotion towards Rama to achieve divinity. This simple ritual did not involve any complex processes adopted by other seekers performing austerities of extreme nature like injuring the body, nor was one required to renounce the householders' life and leave for the jungle, or the solitude in the Himalaya. The way to self-realisation recommended by Swamiji was the way of love. It was the way of urge to get dissolved, to recite the sacred name, to bring the spirit on the tip of the tongue and unite it with the supreme soul. Whosoever came to Swamiji got the bliss he desired. Nobody returned disappointed. Even the deities knew the miraculous unique power within him and sent their devotees who desired salvation, to Shrimath in Swamiji's service. One such incident was that of a saint Vijay from Sindh who was wandering about in the world in search of a person who would bring him to a state of beholding the Supreme Soul, but could not find one. Wherever he went, he was given only one advice

that the only saint in the world who could distribute the ultimate salvation freely was Swami Ramananda of Shrimath at Kashi.

This sage Vinay came to Kashi with a desire to know about Brahman. He met renowned experts, sages, saints and holy men to whom he clearly told : "I do not want bookish knowledge. Do not teach me methods. Take me to Brahman." None could fulfil his desire of seeing Brahman. Everyone was telling him to meet Swami Ramanand. The advice from all of them made Muni Vinay to resolve to meet Swami Ramananda. Putting a halt to his wandering, one day Muni Vinay cast away all his hesitatious and straightway reached Srimath. He introduced himself to Acharya Anantananda, and requested permission to see Swamiji. Acharya Anantananda led him upto the entrance of the cave. The curtain was drawn. The Muni introduced himself from outside the curtain. He said, "I have come here at your service with a desire to dwell in the inner vision in order to behold the Divine Soul."

The all-knowing Swamiji knew that he would understand neither sciences nor the means. He should be made to learn Brahman by such a method that would make him believe and retain his faith in Shrimath. Swamiji spoke from behind the curtain, "Your wish to understand Brahman will surely be fulfilled. First, go to the Viswanath Temple and bring a Bilwa patra (a leaf of Vilwa tree endeared by Shiva)." Muni Vinay responded, "Swamiji, if this is your command, I will surely go, but I have not visited any temple, never worshipped any deity nor I have ever prayed." So saying, Muni Vinay walked to Vishwanath temple.

When Muni Vinay was returning from the Vishwanath Temple with the Bilwa leaf, miraculously he heard from the leaf the verse from Veda, "Ye Hasti Yachha Naasti Sarve Dadasmin Samahitmiti." He was astonished and stuprified. He hastened his pace and became very anxious to report this incident to Swamiji. Running, he came straight at the entrance of the cave. Parting the curtain, Swamiji appeared and gave him his vision. Seeing the spectacle, Muni Vinay became speechless. As he appeared with his aura, Swamiji asked him,

"Did you bring the Bilwa leaf?"

"Yes, but it started chanting Veda."

"Were you happy or not?"

"I knew so much that He is everywhere. He all pervading."

"Then, what else do you want?"

"That complete experience, that actual vision."

As he said this, Swamiji sprinkled some water from his water container on the Muni's head. Instantly the Muni was transported into deep trance. In his unconscious state, he saw Vibhu* himself. Swamiji kept Muni Vinay in that happy state for some time. On coming back to consciousness, Muni Vinay lowered his head before Swamiji and said, "I am contented. Victory to you" "I found you exactly as I was told about you. You are the noblest of the saints who have come down to Earth. You are the ocean of knowledge. You are the treasure of devotion. Victory to you." So saying, he departed from there.

The news that one could attain immortality by chanting Rama Nama with Surati Yoga as directed by Swami Ramananda, made many conservative pundits raise their eyebrows. There was no dearth of conservatives. Once, one such pundit, a Vedic scholar, Shri Viswanath came to Swamiji with the same thirst of knowledge. It was time for satsang. Swamiji had come out of his cave. Pundit Vishwanath asked him, "What is the inner secret of Rama nama, Swamiji?" Bhagwan Ashutosh also had chanted this mantra and you too are directing us to chant the same. Please enlighten us about its glory, so that a liking for this sacred name arouses in us."

Swamiji replied, "Your inquisitiveness is no doubt appreciable, however such philosophical knowledge is only within the reach of the yogis. One can receive the blissful glory of this invaluable Rama - nama only when the Guru is extremely happy with his disciple and bestows upon him this gift. The best ever known master of this divine principle is God Himself, who is the controller of this universe. Name of that Supreme Power, who is the root of both life and nature, is Lord Rama. Whoever achieves the inner sight by whatever means, can behold the blissful play of the sacred sounds of 'Ra' and 'Ma' woven in the name of Lord Rama. He then experiences the fusion of the Ultimate Power. That is the manifestation of 'Om' and the base of 'Soham' That is the extract of undying ancient sound in the universe. The selfless devotee is the one in whose heart staying the Lord Himself. He only is, devoid of any qualities. He is the one who knows all. He is the one who envisions of the Master Mantra. All the other branches of knowledge like Saptabhangi, Chaturvidvyan, Trividh Karma, Ekadash, even Devotion as well as Trayodash* Sacrifice subside at the touch of his hand. The shining flame exists everywhere. One who

beholds it, identifies with it, gets all his illusions of duality washed off. He becomes one with the Almighty devoid of desire. One who has renounced his ego is beyond quality. The sacrifice of the fruits of actions gives him authority to enjoy the fruit at his will. This is the nature of sacrifice. The greatness of sacrifice lies even to liberate the life of passion to die for the spirit of the Sacred Name of the Lord. Such a sprout shoots up only in that mind of a human being who is adorned with knowledge and modesty. Immortality is possible with knowledge and, its achievement is impossible without knowledge."

Listening to the exhaustive revelation, Pundit Vishwanath's closed eyes opened in gratefulness. He begged that he too should be awarded with the most precious gem of Rama Nama.

It was time for satsang. Swamiji only said: "Keep coming for satsang." On a proper day at a proper time, Swamiji bestowed on him the precious gem of Rama Nama. Receiving the diksha, Vishwanath became his disciple.

Whenever scholars of any religion visited Kashi, they used to come to Shrimath either to have Swamiji's vision or to get definitive answers to their questions. Swamiji had placed before the society a new way of performing spiritual meditation which included Shabda Surati Yoga. This was a blend of existence with qualities and existence devoid of qualities. Using this method, a seeker could easily achieve a state meditation close to Brahman, and could get empowered by divine powers. Attracted by the easier way to salvation the conservatives, intellectuals as well as persons on the path of pure devotion, were rushing here. Swamiji's fame for the miracles which he performed spread in all directions. Even the ghosts and spirits were spreading their hands asking for salvation. Tantras and mantras became powerless before his power His relation was straight with the Almighty Lord. All powers bowed before him. He brought out the powers hidden behind the 'sound' and gave meaning for the expression of Shabdabrahma.

A huge Yajna was organised in Kashi. Shri Chiplunkar, a great 'namdhari*' exponent from Maharashtra had taken the role of the brahma for that Yajna. After Kumaril Bhat of Prayag, Shri Chiplunkar had earned great fame. The traditional ritual performers of Kashi had arranged a grand reception on the occasion. After the final offerings in the sacrifice, the learned exponent Shri Chiplunkar came to Shrimath to see Swamiji. He was

known as a propagator of Jaimini's philosophy. According to Jaimini the knowledge in Vedas is beginningless. Shri Chiplunkar wanted to know why. Swamiji did not give his vision but he spoke from behind the curtain.

Shastri Chiplunkar asked Swamiji, "Swamiji, Acharya Jaimini wrote, 'Amnayasya Kriyarthatwat Anarthakyam Atadarthanam', meaning it was of no use to study the Vedas, why? Swamiji replied, "Jaimini has said this in order not to accept any relation of the Vedas with God, to sustain the circle of birth and death and to keep relations with the mantras, and the deities." Shastri Chiplunkar remained silent for some time and asked, "Revered Saint, with these answers, I am more confused."

He further implored, "I did not understand this, so kindly explain it further." Swamiji knew that Shastri will not be in a position to reach to the core of the contents, hence he sent to him through Swami Anantananda, a flower having eight petals and asked him to take a look at it. Shastri Chiplunkar saw that on two of the petals were two large breasts of a woman, on two petals there were two pans of a weighing balance, on two petals were offshoots of a plant and on two petals were the sun and the moon. In the middle was the form of the Divine Supreme Soul. Astonished, Shasri was about to ask something, when Swamiji blew his south threaded conch. The serene heavenly echo of the conch dissipated all the spiritual illusions and doubts from the mind of Shastri.

Shastri Chiplunkar was very much influenced by Swamiji's approach of spiritual awakening. He said, "Revered Lord, I had heard plenty of praises about you. Today, I have experienced your powers with my own eyes. I cannot fathom the extent of your greatness." Swamiji said, "When religious sciences rightly understand the government of the time, they honourably ascend to achieve final emancipation." Hearing this, Shastri Chiplunkar was immensely gratified.

Greatly impressed with the easiest way of Swamiji's way of imparating knowledge, he praised him from the heart and took his leave. Acharya Anantananda went upto the gate to bid him farewell.



Eight

People get to know the method to gain knowledge from books. Mutual discussions, exchange of thoughts and deliberations in groups help them to develop their knowledge to a great extent. But, when this studied and heard knowledge cannot be put into practice and cannot be implemented, all the efforts made to achieve it become futile.

One scholar from Kahada named Shri Zeetaji, who had made vast studies of hidden mysteries, but when he was left to face the same problem, finally came to surrender to Swamiji. However, luck did not favour him initially. First time he could not get the divine vision of Swmiji. Second time he anxiously spent three days, but again he was not successful. Zeetaji was bent upon to get Swamiji's blessings and did not give up hope. At last he was lucky to behold Swamiji's personal appearance. Seeing the divine splendour, Zeetaji went into trance and wandered about in worlds of meditation. When the trance was over and he opened his eyes, he was in front of Swamiji. Zeetaji said very shyly, "Oh Lord, the passions of the mind do not leave me. Kindly drive away the ghost of lust and save me. Please liberate me. Let me not go hell."

Swamiji was all-knowing. He knew about events taking place with minute details. He said, "Zeetaji, had you listened to your wife, you would not have fallen in to this situation. Tell me, has she not told you that the canal between the house and the forest is very deep, and you cannot come out of it?" Swamiji knew even the secret dialogues between a man and his wife. Remembering this, Zeetaji slowly said, "All knowing saint, you spoke the truth but that time I had a firm decision to go to the forest. Even today I have the same desire but the attraction towards house is uncontrollable. Kindly take me out of the heat caused by my desires. Give me the strength to take the path to the forest without fear. I shall praise you for the rest of my life."

On this, Swamiji said, "Zeetaji, first time you had to go back without getting my vision, you failed to get the message from this hermitage. You will have to bring her here, then only it is possible to find a solution to your problem." Zeetaji hurried back to Kahada and brought his wife

Chupanna to Kashi. The satsang was over and Swamiji was in meditation. When the meditation was over, the curtain opened. The couple saw the divine spectacle and were gratified. Zeetaji's wife religiously presented some offerings; worshipped Swamiji with a lighted lamp, washed his feat and partook of that water.

In order to make Zeetaji symbolically understand the purpose of asking him to bring his wife, Swamiji asked his wife two questions. The first question was: What is the difference between the open space around the house and the forest? The second question was, which is the world where the sun does not shine? For the first question, she answered by wiping away her eyes. For the second question she rubbed her palms. Zeetaji could not understand anything. But Swamiji knew the meaning. He blew his conch to test her love. At the sound of the conch she stood up and pleaded, "O Lord, please do not tell out the secret. Keep my modesty intact. Swamiji said, "You appeared in three forms at one stretch and enhanced his desire for sensuality. Only a few could escape from it. You are an embodiment of 'avidya' (lack of knowledge). Don't do such a thing in future. Pundit Zeetaji has come to surrender to me. See how is he praying to me, folding his hands. I have to protect him on his way to the forest."

When Swamiji said this, Chupanna left the place. With the blessings of Swamiji, Zeetaji tore out of the shroud of lust and came back to his own self.

Swamiji took great care of all those who surrendered to him and offered them protection. Once he granted boon of life to his disciple Padmateshwar. He belonged to Kashi and he was Swamiji's faithful disciple. Everyday, he used to attend the satsang. At home, sitting in solitude, he used to meditate chanting Rama nama. One night, during his meditation, the upsurge of consciousness made his breath get stuck in the fourth state. The upstream stopped.

Swamiji, in his meditation came to know about his disciple's condition and reached the house of Padmateshwar along with Acharya Anantananda. He saw that his life had stuck up in the 'khechari mudra'. He liberated him from that state. Padmateshwar opened his eyes. When he came to normalcy, Swamiji sent him to Gagan guha the place where Padmateshwar wanted to reach at any cost, even risking his life. After reaching Gagan guha, he saw the divine wonder of the power of Rama nama. It was unreachable even with meditation, Swami could materialise it with a snap of his finger. He

stuck to the feet of Swamiji. Swamiji advised him to continue meditation with attention and returned to Shrimath with Acharya Anantananda.

His followers were grateful to him for all the care which Swamiji took of them. They always felt, "He is the real 'guru'. For taking care of his disciples, he was always available, no matter it is day or night."

One more example kept the people of Kashi spell-bound. Amongst his faithful disciples, one named Dudhnath was also staying in Kashi. Like Shravan kumar (a well known boy who served his parents with full devotion), he too was known for taking care of his parents. On one fateful day he died of snake bite. His lamenting parents were left helpless. When Swamiji heard about it, he sent one of his disciples along with the water of his feet. On sprinkling the water Dudhnath's face, he opened his eyes. The incident spread in Kashi and their love and devotion towards Swamiji further increased.

Another event involving snake bite was a wonder talked about in Kedareshwar. Nagar was one of the ardent disciples of Swamiji. One day, he was bitten by a snake. His lamenting wife was in extreme grief. Knowing the incident, Swamiji reached his place at once. Hearing the sound of Swamji's conch, the serpent appeared there and started dancing. Swamiji asked, "Why did you bite the husband of this chaste woman? Take away the venom." On Swamiji's direction, the serpent stopped dancing and began sucking back the poison from the wound. Within a short time, Nagar opened his eyes. The serpent begged pardon by touching Swamiji's feet. On Swamiji's signal the serpent silently disappeared from there. Nagar couple washed Swamiji's feet with their tears. They asked pardon for having given him trouble. The great kindness and limitless divine powers of Swamiji was the topic of discussion in every house.

There are countless tales about Swamiji's wonderful blessings. His incarnation itself was for service to humanity. The past, the present and the future were as clear to him as the sunlight. No facts were hidden from him. There is another story of Indramani who was a she-goat in her previous life. On one unfortunate day, she was swept away in the flood of the Ganga. She got caught on a tree in the water and met with her death. Since she died in the sacred river, she had human birth in her next life. However, she remembered the event when she got stuck against a tree in the water. Her face too had become like a goat. The story answers many complicated issues of Psychiatrists and Physiologists. The story proclaims the sanctity

of the waters of Ganga. It also establishes the fact that a feminine body takes a feminine body in the next birth too. Her face was like a goat, hence she was not accepted by anybody in the society. Her ugliness was an obstacle. The whole family was very sad. They did not know what to do. Someone advised them, "Go to Shrimath. The head of the hermitage is Brahman Himself. He is very benevolent, and kind-hearted. Seeing disstress, he melts like wax. He will surely convert her ugly face into a beautiful one." Taking the advice, they took her to Shrimath. The parents started weeping uncontrollably. Indramani in her extreme embarrassment too was crying in humility. Her father kept his head on the door-frame of the cave and wept bitterly. Benevolent Swamiji opened the curtain and gave them his vision. Indramani too kept her head on the door. Swamiji blew his conch which took them into a deep slumber. the father could see the entire scene when the goat had got stuck against a palash tree in the river Ganga. When he returned to normalcy, he said, "Swamiji, I cannot bear to see her past, kindly make her future pleasant. Please take pity on this poor brahmin. Please find a good groom for her."

Swamiji considered everyone equally. He never discriminated between brahmin and non-brahmin. Kind at heart, he advised them a remedy. "You go to that spot where the face of the goat stuck up against the tree. Remove the goat and perform final rituals and bury it in the land nearby. As the goat receives the final rituals, the girl's face will also be reformed." The brahmin did as he was told by Swamiji. Indramani's face radiated with beauty. The brahmin couple celebrated the boon with great joy. They brought offerings to Shrimath and distributed sweets amongst all present there. By Swamiji's grace, Indramani's marriage also took place with grand celebration. There was no limit to the joy of the brahmin couple. The happy couple paid their heartfelt respects to Swamiji to express their gratitude.

One more strange event occurred which brought out the divinity and fame of Swamiji. A couple belonging to Vysya community was walking through the 'Kamrup' forest along with their daughter. There they saw a beautiful bird which was chanting 'Ramananda, Ramananda'. Vysya's daughter was so impressed and delighted to see the beautiful bird she ran and caught hold of it. The poor bird was unable fly, it was easy to catch it. The Vysya girl tried to feed the bird, but it did not take food. Finally she offered it the porridge which she was carrying for herself and it immediately started relishing it. It was an amazing experience for them.

The Vysya couple enquired with the nearby people about the name 'Ramananda' which the bird was chanting continuously. "Is it a person?" It was also a possibility that this bird was a human being in its previous birth and its desire to see Ramananda could not be fulfilled. Then one of the persons in the crowd said, "There is a great saint, Ramananda in Kashi and it is possible that this bird is his disciple." With an empathy for the bird, the Vysya couple and their daughter took the bird in a cage to Kashi and reached Shrimath. They met Acharya Anantananda and told him the entire story. Acharya Anantananda himself was amazed and he informed this to Swamiji. Swamiji gave instructions from the cave to set the bird free. The Vysya opened the cage. Instantly the bird flew to the entrance of the cave and sat there. Swamiji blew the conch and the bird got transformed into a beautiful woman. She folded her hand and started praying to Swamiji. "O Lord, O the greatest among humans, O destroyer of sins, O holy splendour, Victory to you. You only brought me here. I had gone in search of my beloved Gautam but the Kamarup people had kept me bound there and turned me into a bird. Now you have given me a human form and make me meet my beloved Gautam." Hearing this, the curtain parted and Swamiji came out. At the sight of Swamiji, the bird transformed into her form of Usha Kinnari. Swamiji said, "Go back to your Kinnara world where you will find your beloved." Gratified, Usha Kinnari touched Swamiji's feet and disappeared.

Watching this astonishing scene, Vysya girl was very much impressed. Her parents too watched it devotedly and later became Swamiji's disciples.

In the caves of the Himalayas, since long years, many saints had been meditating in order to satisfy their thirst to have the vision of the Supreme. Wrinkles had covered their bodies, hairs grew long and covered their bodies. They could master all the arts of the yoga, but did not reach the state of emancipation. Finally they dropped their bodies on the snow. During the lifetime of Swami Ramananda, one very aged yogi, Gohinnath was doing severe austerities in the Himalayas, the land of gods, but even there he could not achieve the eternal deliverance. He heard about the sanctity of Shabda-Surati-Yoga of Swami Ramananda. He also learnt that it was very easy to achieve self realization through love, devotion and yoga, without putting in much austerity. He moved from the Himalayas and came down to Shrimath. Swamiji was in meditation. Guessing that

there is some time at his disposal before the vision of Swamiji, he started performing the postures of Surya, Mai, Ujjayee, Sheetali, Asmika, Bhramari and Kevali combined with pranayama (yogic breathing exercise) as laid down in Yoga Sastra. Then came the sound of conch which threw subtle illumination inside Yogi Gohina Nath. The light removed all darkness from his inner self. Parting the curtain Swamiji came near Yogi Gohin Nath and said, "Yogiraj, there was no need of such an exhibition. The scholar of Pancha dharana and Shambhavi Mudra does not expect Bandha Mudra. Yogi Gohin nath smilingly said - 'I was rehearsing before the Guru, the earlier lessons learned so that I would be able to proceed further with your advanced lessons." The apt answer given by the Yogi Gohin Nath impressed Swamiji and he was greatly pleased. The humility of the yogi pleased Swamiji. He said, "Anything attained by artificial means remain under control of those practices, but what is achieved out of love remains absolute, natural and permanent." On this, the Yogi said, "I came here at your service all the way from the Himalaya with the purpose of achieving the devotion through love. Please have mercy on me." Swami Ramananda said, "Love will descend from the eyes to the heart. Just lift the eyelashes." As the yogi met with Swamiji's gaze, he went into a divine state of trance and experienced oneness with the soul. He had such a blissful experience simply by lifting his eyelashes, which he had never attained through ardent penance of years.

When he came out of the trance, Yogi Gohin Nath said, "I bow before you, O, great saint; the fully enlightened spirit. I wasted all my life in the Himalayas. You made me a 'Prem Yogi' and have granted me the intuition to be with Lord Ram. Let me continue to be in this joyous state. I am caught now with this burning desire."

"This yearning itself is the soul of devotion. Chant his name constantly with dedication. Immerse in the meditation. He will be with you for ever and ever. There is great power in the very name of Lord Ram. He is hungry of love."

After remaining there for a few days, Yogi Gohin Nath took diksha of Shabda-Surati-Yoga woven with devotion for Lord Ram and departed from Shrimath, with profound gratitude for Swamiji.

When in life one gets attracted towards the earthly illusion and forgets the real existence and remains in dogmatic pride, one never thinks of the selfless path towards emancipation. And when some divine Guru

blesses one such person and cuts the strings of material attraction either by the blessings of the Supreme Soul or through destiny, and liberates him from the entanglement of his five senses, then only one starts entering into the inner world, devoid of attachments and reaches the state where his intellect finds oneness with the supreme. Such a person then receives the final emancipation right in his lifetime. Unaware of this secret of spiritual science, one Mangi Purohit, the disciple of Guru Karoviya - the guru of Aryas believing in worshipping the sacred deity of Western Fire - took permission from his guru and reached Shrimath. It was satsang time when he reached. He paid respects to Swamiji and said, "I am innocent by my body and my mind and have come to your feet to get the divine knowledge of spiritual selfless path." Swamiji said, "Selfless deliverance is available to him who is totally free from pride. You must first give up the pride of being innocent." Mangi Purohit said, "Kindly remove it from within me." Swamiji said, "Kiss the feet of that person who has tied dancing bells in his feet and is simply immersed in the extreme piety of selfless spirit. All your pride will be washed off." The moment Mangi Purohit went and tried to kiss his feet, the saint who was engrossed in devotional state, abruptly sat up and embraced Mangi. It was an embrace of two innocent and pure of hearts. The pride of being innocent in Mangi flew away. Mangi tried a lot to kiss his feet, but the saint did not allow him to free from the embrace to his chest. He was giving a bath to Mangi with his tears full of affection and devotion. This meeting removed the inner veils of ignorance in both. Both were beholding the pure Supreme Soul, both became entitled to receive that selfless spiritual state.

After completing satsang, Swamiji entered his cave. Both followed him there. Later both of them became Swamiji's disciples. Seeing the highest spiritual power of Guru Ramananda, both were amazed and astonished. How did he perform the feat of flowing the consciousness of one disciple in to that of another aspirant? How did he bestow the disciples sitting at distance, with spiritual power. Swamiji wished to send him back to his country and said "Now you continue your meditation at your place where Karoviya is already there." But Mangi did not wish to be sent back. He expressed his desire to remain in India. He said, "As you wish". Mangi Purohit sent the message accordingly to his teacher Karoviya. The divinity of Swamiji was a discussion in every household.

During the regime of Chandragupta Maurya, India had very cordial relations with Unan. Celucas, in order to strengthen his relations with

India, got his daughter Helen married to King Chandragupta Mourya. Anatolia was a saint who followed Eshi school of thought. He was worshiping God in His child form. He was living in solitude far away from Patna. Once he received a grave injury in the forest which worsened and became serious. The people of that village took him to his cottage in a bullock cart. However he met a premature death. It is a belief that desires of persons meeting untimely death remain unfulfilled and in consequence, he does not receive salvation nor gets another life. With his unfulfilled desires, he wanders in the ghosts' world. When the spirit of Anatolia was roaming in the Himalayas, once at twilight time he happened to see the vision of Rukmanand to whom he narrated his misery. Rukmanand took pity on the spirit for its condition and said, "If you desire to be liberated from this world, you go to Kashi Shrimath and see Swami Ramananda. He is the supreme liberated saint. He is very benevolent. Whoever surrenders to him, he grants salvation. How long the spirit should suffer in the ghosts' world?"

Hearing this, the spirit of Antolio went to Kashi and wandered near Shrimath. He was not getting the vision of Swamiji. Swamiji saw the spirit wandering and called him. Reaching, there it started praising Swamiji, 'O, you are the supreme who helps to cross the ocean of material world, O, you are the great saviour of poor people. I have come in surrender to you. Please take pity on my miserable situation. Liberate me from the ghostly world and place me in the human world. Swamiji was committed to the welfare of the people. Assuring him, he said, 'Don't be frightened. Rukmanand appeared before you and had the kindness to send you here. He has given you the chance. Meeting a saint is like meeting God. Merely the sight is enough to cure all types of miseries. All grief will come to an end. Your wish will be fulfilled. No more waiting and wandering. You will come back to the normal life. So saying, he sprinkled the mantra empowered water on him. The spirit came out of the ghosts' world and straightway entered Bhuma's world of light; he received beatitude. The news about the liberation of Antolia reached Unan along with Swamiji's greatness. He was regarded as a universal guru.

Swamiji not only liberated people affected by the spirits, but also freed young people of the society from the clutches of selfish, fraudulent tantriks. A brahmin woman named Vini had learned trantra vidya by falling into a trap of some wicked tantric. However, an extreme obsession constantly in the illusionary yoga art, aroused in her strong sensuality.

Her sexual desire flared up so much that she used to lift a youth sleeping in the night through whom she used to satisfy her sexual needs.

Vini herself was a beauty. Her body was sensuous with full youthfulness. Once when she was wandering in the streets of Kashi at night, she saw a healthy and handsome young person asleep. Her desire was instantly aroused and she wanted that man having perfect physique for satisfying her desire. She lifted him in his sleeping condition using her tantrik power. She made him her man for fulfilling her insatiable sexual desire. For long time she kept him with her. His worried parents collapsed with this shock. They waited for a few days. They were hoping that he would have gone somewhere, but would soon return. They searched for him everywhere but could not find their son. Once their neighbour advised them to surrender to Swami Ramananda. They went to him and weeping bitterly, reported about the miserable story to Swamiji. They said, "He is our only son. Please have mercy on us. Nobody has ever returned without receiving blessings from you." Swamiji heard their sad story and his heart melted. He meditated and found that the boy was under the spell of a tantrik woman. Swamiji said, "You will get back your son." Hearing this, the faces of the couple lit up. Father folded his hands and asked, "Where is our son? When will we get him? We just can't wait to see him. You are the Lord Himself." Swamiji told, "Your son has been held captive in the house of a tantrik woman in Maza. Go and enter her house without prior intimation. He would be lying on a cot in a semi-conscious state. When you reach there, take the flower from under the pillow and give him its smell. He will immediately get up with full energy. He will accompany you.. When you reach there, Vini will not be at home. You come out with your son without delay."

Without wasting time, the parents followed Swamiji's instruction and found out the address of Vini in Maza. They reached the room where their son was kept. He was lying on a cot in semi-conscious state. The father took out the flower from below the pillow and had him smell it. The son became energetic. Seeing his parents near him, he got up and straightaway came out of the house.

When Vini returned home, she got infuriated not to see the young man on the cot. She resorted to her tantrik action and came to know that Swami Ramananda had given her address to the father of the young man and had told him the method of liberating him. Her eyes became red with fury. Right away she trespassed Shrimath. Acharya Anantananda stopped

her. Swamiji blew his conch from inside. As she was hearing the sound of the conch, all her tantra-mantra came to be ineffective. Swamiji used his yogic power and frightened her with very horrible and fearful sights. She got very much frightened and requested Acharya Anantananda to get her Swamiji's vision. Reaching the entrance to the cave, she prayed in melodious words, "Please save me from this sinful deed. I ask for your pardon. In future I will not indulge in such evil acts. Save me."

Swamiji said, "You have brought stigma to Mahakali's tantrik powers. In Tantra's name, you are stigmatic". On this Vini said, "Please forgive me. The evil Kapalikas used me as the yoga maya and awakened in me such a flaming desire that I could not live without a man. I am accursed. Only you can liberate me from this condition. You can give me good life. You can lead me to the path to salvation. Please save me." Swamiji said, "In Maza the Kapalikas will not allow you to live peacefully. They are very cruel. The tantra knowledge should be used for the people's welfare. These people have polluted it. The chastity of a woman has been tampered openly. You continue here for a few more days. Staying here, take the 'mantra diksha', practice good deeds like Shabda Surati Yoga. You will attain peace. You will get liberated from this curse and progress through the path to emancipation without hindrances."

As she heard this, Vini fell at the feet of Swamiji. She prayed for his mercy. After some days, Swamiji sent her to the Vindhyas. Vini stared meditating peacefully in that region.

The "Preta Yoni' and the 'Rakshasa Yoni' are different. The preta (spirit) does not harm anyone, but the 'rakshasas' (evils) cause several problems to the household people. Near Shrimath, there was a 'preta' who was a poet in Sanskrit in earlier life and had gone to preta yoni in concequence of his sins. He began to go around Shrimath pleading to get liberated by Swamiji. It was saying, "O the abode of mercy, I can't enter the hermitage. I am praying from outside, to free me from this dead people's world. I am longing for your mercy since many days."

Swamiji melted with that pathetic call. He freed the spirit from the 'preta yoni' with mercy and sent it to heaven directly. Getting freed, as it was going up in the divine chariot, on its way to heaven, a 'brahmarakshas*' approached his chariot and said, "Take me also to heaven with you." The spirit told the Rakshas, "How can you go to heaven without freeing yourself from this Rakshasa yoni? You stop chasing me and surrender to Swamiji of

Shrimath at Kashi. You request him. He is very merciful. Only he can release you." But the brahmarakshas did not agree, and caught hold of the chariot. Then the messengers of God hit him severely and dropped him below. He fell on the sands of a river. There he caught hold of a boy from Shreshthi's family and riding on his head, he reached his house. There he started harassing the family as was his habit. Sometimes he put the house on fire; sometimes he used to pull the cots. Everyday he brought a new trouble for the house. The Shreshthi, head of the family consulted the exorcists and tried to get rid of him, but that was of no avail. Then the brahmarakshasa said, "Take the boy to Shrimath at the service of Swami Ramananda. He will only liberate me and the boy also will be alright. Shreshthi took the boy to Shrimath. Along with him, the brahmarakshas also entered the hermitage. The Shreshti prayed to Swamiji to free his son from the clutches of the brahma rakshas, but Swamiji fell into a dilemma. Then the brahma rakshas folded its hands and spoke through the boy's mouth, "Kindly liberate me too from this rakshas yoni." Swamiji said, "How did you dare enter the hermitage? Your liberation is impossible." Hearing this, the rakshas fell at his feet. Swamiji said, "You have to take another birth for extirpating your karma. Your pure and good deeds only will take you to liberation. Come to me then. Leaving the child, get away from the hermitage."

The brahma rakshas obeyed Swamiji's command and freed the boy. he went away from the hermitage. By Swamiji's grace, he took another birth, and then it started religious life to accomplish religion and good work.

Even the gods bowed to the spiritual powers of Swamiji. Because, the gods were not able to get salvation after remaining in the deva-yoni. To achieve salvation, they had to be born as human beings. Two youths named Lumbavahan and Chandraprabh, of Nandishwar, Benares, who were cursed and whose sensual desires had not been satisfied got attracted to girls. Lumbavahan to a brahmin girl and Chandraprabh to a vysya girl. They wanted to possess the girls. They allured the girls with delicious food or fragrant flowers. They always fell after them. They prevented their marriages too.

Whenever proposals for their marriages came up, they somehow got the prospective grooms killed. Fathers of the girls became worried and came surrendering to Swamiji. Swamiji gave his vision and heard their sad story. He meditated and saw that they were vidyadhars from the god's

hierarchy. With his yogic power, Swamiji summoned them. They presented themselves in invisible form. On Swamiji's orders they cast their invisibility and became visible. Seeing their handsome physique and attractive features, the brahmin and the vysya fathers thought them to be ideal grooms for their daughters. Swamiji also said, "You will never get better grooms." With Swamiji's words, both the fathers agreed. Treating the consent of the fathers as the blessings of Swamiji, both the Vidyadhar boys touched Swamiji's feet. In the meantime, at the signal of Swamiji, Acharya Anantananda brought four garlands from inside. Lumbvahan garlanded the brahman girl, Chandraprabh garlanded the vysya girl then the brahmin girl garlanded Lumbavahan and the vysya girl did Chandraprabh. Thus they were tied into the wedlock. Both the grooms stood by the sides of the brides and bowing down to the father's feet, accepted the relationship silently. Then all the four took the divine blessings from Swamiji.

The marriages which took place by the mercy of Swamiji, and it brought about the union of dev-lok and bhu-lok (the heavenly and the earthly) for the first time at Shrimath. When they reached Nandeeshwar, they celebrated the marriages in a grand manner.

After many years, both the couples satisfied their wedded life in complete contentment, came to Shrimath carrying some delicious porridge for Swamiji and rice preparation in golden and silver bowls for the saints of the hermitage. Both the couples bowed with all attention and started praising him in sweet Sanskrit, the divine language. There they performed worship with lighted lamps. Lumbavahan requested, "After getting your vision we have lost interest in material things. We realised that salvation is the ultimate happiness." Immediately Chandraprabh said, "Swamiji, the heaven is known for enjoying. The belief is, there is only enjoyment in heaven, nothing else. The inhabitants of heaven create pleasure and die with sufferance of pleasure. You have such a pleasure which is rare even to the gods."

"There are saints in heaven. Why didn't you take paramartha diksha from them?" asked Swamiji.

"Why should we look for another when we have in you a divine saint who blessed us with marital bliss and who sowed within us the seeds of renounciation?" said Lumbavahan. Chandraprabh joined Lumbavahan and added, "In all the three worlds, we have not met a man of ultimate

liberation like you. You are the Lord of the Lords. Your incarnation is not only for human salvation but for gods too. The gods take birth on this earth for their liberation." Swamiji heard these words of praise from the clever vysya groom. He smiled and said, "Your desire for detachment is welcome. Instead of caring for yourself, be in service to the society and live with that idea."

Both the couples accepted Swamiji's direction and put their heads at his feet. At a proper time, Swamiji blessed them with 'Naishthik diksha'* for their renounced life. He gave them that joyous self realisation, where there was no place for desires. He directed them to go to Chitrakoot and serve the dwellers of the forests. Chitrakoot had the spiritual energy pervading there and it is sanctified by the presence of Shri Rama.

Both the couples bowed before Swamiji and proceeded to Chitrakoot.

* * *

Nine

After the trip to Ayodhya, Swami Ramananda was looking forward to a religious journey to promote the cult of devotion amongst the people and to save the country and the society from the tyranny of rogues. Acharya Anantananda was already taking care of Shriath with the co-operation of other disciples. Many committed volunteers were at his service. Hence there was no problem in undertaking the religious journey leaving the Shriath in care of the disciples. Achrya Anantananda carried out the Guru's orders and invited the people. He sat with the two chief disciples, Shri Kabir and Shri Raidas and made arrangements in a grand manner for setting out on to the religious journey. He gave serious consideration to the invitations coming from distant places. The invitation from Sant Pipa had already come. It was Swamiji's desire too to go to Gagaron Fort first. Hence the route to Gagaron Fort was settled. Route for places, pilgrim centres to be vistited was finalised. A palanquin was also arranged for Swamiji. Names of the disciples and other brahmacharis were also finalised. It was decided that altogether sixty persons would accompany him and accordingly everyone was informed. Many more faithful disciples were there but Acharya Anantananda fixed the number at sixty to manage the voyage properly. At the instruction of Swamiji, Acharya Anantananda sent one disciple in advance to Gagaron Fort to work at the schedule.

As Acharya Anantananda was organising the details of the religious journey with the co-operation of revered teachers, Swami Ramananda who was the incarnate of Shri Rama, recalled that when Rama, the son of King Dasaratha of Treta Yuga*, worshipped Shiva before he set out to conquer Lanka. Swami Ramananda also wanted to worship Shiva before setting out for 'digvijay'. He wished to visit the temple of Viswanath and receive His blessings. On the day of Shivaratri, at daybreak i.e. at 'Brahma Muhurta', he got ready and reached Viswanath Temple. The entrance to the temple was closed. He looked around for a panda or pujari and waited for sometime. When he found that no one was seen, he was about to return, then suddenly the doors of the temple opened. Nandiswar - Lord

Shiva himself, was standing at the door with a pleasing smile, inviting him inside. The joy for Swami Ramananda was boundless. As he entered the temple, Lord Viswanath himself with his consort Bhagvati Parvathi was ready to welcome him. As Swami Ramananda was bowing down in order to show his respect, Lord 'Shiva' made him sit by his side and said, "I bow three times before the person who chants Rama nama once. But you are always in the turiya - state totally immersed in Rama's blissful glory. I am at a loss to understand what honour should I offer you?" Swami Ramanand said, "Please give your blessings, in the same manner as you had given for the victory to Dasarath's son Rama over Ravana, the king of Lanka, Please bless that my religious journey to be successful. Present times are full of sinful contaminated acts, the country is suffering from the shackles of slavery. The atrocities of evil elements are increasing. You are the Lord Nilkantha. It would be difficult to accomplish success in my religious journey in such a situation, hence I long have your mercy." Lord Shiva gave his blessings and said, "Your religious journey will be victorious. You have with you the south threaded conch which can convert even enemies into lovers of peace. What else do you need?" Then Swami Ramananda said, "I have already requested Kali yuga not to put obstacles in my way. He has also given his assurance. You are the 'Maha Kala', supreme Time of all the Times." So saying, Swami Ramananda performed ceremonial worship in sixteen ways. He applied sandal paste on his forehead, kept a garland of fragrance around his neck, applied 'akshata' (rice smeared with turmeric)". As he was bowing down, Bhut Nath - Lord Siva embraced him. "You are Ramanand. Rama is worshipped by me. You are yourself Rama's incarnation. Shouldn't I worship you? You have overpowered the cruel Kali, it was a right act of yours. He wanted to get holy advice from Sage Vyas, but the latter refused to give it to him. You have given that advice and satisfied him. Let your religious yatra be successful. You propagate devotion to Rama and return to Kashi hail and hearty. My best compliments are with you. The Goddess was listening to all this dialogue. She too presented her divine grace to Swaimiji. He was too happy to receive it. He said, "You are the admirable power of Sadashiva - Lord Shiva. Without your blessings, how will I get vigour." Then Lord Shiva blessed him with open arms with an insightful smile on his face.

When Swamiji was about to take leave, Lord Viswanath said, "Won't you let us hear the sound of the conch?" Then Swamiji blew the south threaded conch, a divine energy filled everywhere. Everyone woke up. The pandas and pujaris too got up. Swamiji had already taken leave. The

pandas and pujaris saw that the temple doors were open. They were surprised. All the things were in their proper places. The idol of Lord Ashutosh was smeared with sandal paste. Definitely it should be the miracle of a divine person who had performed the worship of Lord Shiva at the Brahmamuhurta and had left. It was Shiva Ratri. The news that Swami Ramananda had come there to worship Shiva was the topic at all places. The temple doors had opened by themselves, this fact was another spectacular incident proving the divinity of Swamiji.

Swami Ramananda's earnest desire was to create an environment of enthusiasm in the country to arouse the society which had collapsed. He wanted to rejuvenate the society into a unified whole, and to make the Hindu population stand upright with alertness and unified energy. On an auspicious day, he started his journey with his group of disciples to Gagaron Fort. Swamiji was seated in a palanquin. Acharya Anantananda and a disciple Naraharianand were on the sides fanning Swamiji. On the way to Gagaron fort, though they halted at some places, but no discourses were held by Swamiji in order to reach Gagaron in time. However, the devoted people of the villages and the towns accompanied the glorious journey on their own. Devotion and respect was flowing from the minds of the people as a river fast and full. They were anxious to have at least a brief divine glance from Swamiji.

The joy of his great disciple Shri Peepa had no bounds. As soon as he heard the announcement from a distance that the religious journey who approaching Gagaron Fort, Shri. Peepaji took King Bhajraj along with him and proceeded to accord a warm welcome. They were ready with royal dignity. Saint Peepaji prostrated and welcomed the Guruji with his heart full of feeling and pleasure. King Bhajraj also touched his feet and received his blessings. Peepaji and Bhojraj greeted all the saints of the group. Swamiji was brought to Gagaron to the accompaniment of songs and drumbeats. A beautiful cottage had been constructed for Swamiji's stay. It had all the comforts and beautifully decorated from outside. All the accompanying saints were also accommodated properly by Gagaron people.

Gagaron Fort was situated on top of a hill in a location where the rivers Kalisindh and Ahu joined. It was protected by tall and strong ramparts on all the four sides. To reach the inner part, one had to cross two large thresholds. In those times, Gagaron was a big state. Among the royal palaces it had a great reputation. Right from the time the news of Swamiji's

arrival came, everyone was talking about Swamiji's divine miracles. The people had been longing for the vision of Swamiji. The crowd swelled everyday for satsang with devoted people from villages nearby. The queen also did not leave any stone unturned in serving Swamiji. They found themselves fortunate in being blessed by washing of Swamiji's feet, prostration and chanting Rama Nama sitting in his presence. Prior to the discourse by Swamiji, Sant Kabir and Sant Raidas used to get the devoted audience to chant Rama nam. The entire environment was filled with Rama's presence. Swami Ramanand came to the pandal and pleased all the devotees with his divine presence everyday. The sound of the conch not only made the atmosphere serene but also filled the area with spirituality. After listening to the discourse, the charmed devotees rushed to him to become his disciples. Swamiji used to tell them all, "Keep your souls open and your thoughts so broad that you will be able to see the entire world in them and you will see yourself in the world. Gagaron Fort is very priviledged that liberated yogis like Peepaji, who is a great devotee of Rama has chosen it as his abode. All the inhabitants of this place are fortunate who have achieved the goodness of leading their lives with the aura of his divine light. This earth is pure and sacred; it has given birth to divine persons and nourished them in its lap. Have faith in them and live accordingly. Where Saint Peepa is present, Ramanand is also present. Do not ever try to see difference between him and Ramananda. His messages are my messages. All of you should mingle and resonate the earth with the sound of Rama nama. The trees, the rivers and the mountains should resonate with the Rama Nama. Ram controls the universe. This universe is the image of Rama. There is no one other than Ram. There is great power in Rama Nama. All of you sit in a corner of the house in solitude; in meditation and chant the name of Ram continuously. Lord Rama who is controlling the world, is not far away from you. He is sitting inside you. By reciting Rama nam He will himself call you. He will come to you and present Himself. He will make your present life and the next life meaningful." Listening to the discourse by Swamiji, the enchanted people praised him with wholehearted cries of victory.

One day, after the discourse, a devotee from the audience stood up and asked, "Swamiji, in order to make your valuable advice meaningful and fruitful, what are the things we should do?" On this, Swamiji replied, "My 'chaturmasa' will take place here. Meet Acharya Anantananda. He will make you understand the method of Shabda-Surati-Yoga woven with Rama nam. This is a simple, natural method. In this, you are not required to

walk on the edge of the sword of 'Nirguna' (devoid of qualities) nor do you have to get entangled in the 'Saguna' (adorned with qualities). This is a way balanced between these two where aspiration for the union and an insight to have the vision are together present. We have to sit and recite name and meditate. All the steps of performing it will become simple by practice." After this, the religious classes of Acharya Anantananda were held. On the instructions of Acharya Anantananda, Saint Kabir and Saint Raidas who were given assignment of coordinating the people, they sat with them and through discussions, told them about Rama Nama and the method of meditation. They advised them to practice the Shabda Surati Yoga as required. Other saints also had already started telling the people about the miracles and directed them towards Rama bhakti (devotion to Rama). The believers got attracted more and more towards the yoga of the devotion of love. Whenever Swamiji proposed for leaving, the people requested Peepaji to make him stay for more time. Saint Peepaji told them, "It is good luck of the residents of Gagaron that Swamiji is staying with us for the four months period. He is not going anywhere. Is it not our fortune that he has chosen Gagaron as the first place to visit? Continue meditating. Afterwards I shall of course be there with you.

Peepaji was benefitted most by the chaturmasa of Swamiji. He pleased the Guru with his 'Guru-nishtha' (serving the guru). The Guru also granted and decorated him with many divine powers. After the chaturmasa, the next programme was planned. They were to proceed to Jagannath Puri directly. Peepaji also wanted to accompany them. At that time, the youngest queen of Shri. Peepaji Sita expressed her desire to go with them befitting the tradition of the royal saints. All warned her about the difficulties would face in the journey and tried to dissuade her, but she was very firm on her decision. Finally Swamiji granted her the sanctity of renounciation and endorsed with her decision to accompany them. She wore the dress of a saint. Rani Sita's original name was Rani Solankhadi Padmavati. Seeing Rani's unflinching decision, like that of Sita who accompanied her husband Rama to the forest, Swamiji also started addressing her as Sita. Peepaji was already calling her as Rani Sita. During the journey Swamiji visited many pilgrim centres, temples and hermitages and gave discourses for the welfare of humanity.

When the religious journey was nearing Jagannath Puri, Lord Jagannath took the form of a brahmachari and welcomed Swamiji. As a mark of welcome, he came to the palanquin and submitted a welcome

address. Only Swamiji knew this divine mystery; but no one else. On the part of the temple, all arrangements for his stay and food had been well-arranged. Swamiji took only 'payasa' (porridge) for which separate arrangement was made.

The residents of Jagannath Puri reported to Swamiji that very often the sea water encroaches the land. Swamiji asked Kabirdas to resolve the problem. Sant Kabir reached the sea early in the morning and putting a demarcation mark on the land, asked the sea not to exceed that point. Similarly, the residents of that area reported that even after redigging and dredging there is no water in Chandan lake. Swamiji asked Yoganand to go there to solve the problem. The disciple reached there and sat in meditation. With Swamiji's mercy, the lake was filled with water. The people were immensely gratified. The city of Jagannath Puri was engrossed in doing servie to Swamiji.

At the time of bidding farewell, Lord Jagannath, in the form of a brahmachari brought the payasa. What can be hidden from the all knowing Swamiji? He thanked the Lord for the service provided for him all these days. Jagannath made him sit by his side and fed him with payasa. The brahmachari, Lord himself took the responsibility to see the arrangements for Swamiji's travel to Rameswaram. He bade the group a warm farewell. The happy people of Puri raised slogans in praise of Swamiji.

During the travel to Puri Swamiji invoked Sage Kapil, the follower of Sankhya philosophy. When saint Kapil took his seat, Swamiji worshipped him with his lotus-like hands, reciting the holy mantras. Swamiji described the glory of the water of the Ganga and said, "Bathing in the Ganga once is equal to baths several times in other sacred rivers." Swamiji requested the Saint Kapil to settle in a hermitage at the Ganga-sagar. From that time, every year the practice of sacred bath in the Kapil Tirth on Makar Sankranti was commenced.

Before Swamiji reached Rameswaram, the king of Vijayanagaram, Shri. Bukka Rai welcomed him with honour. All arrangements for the stay at Rameswaram were done by the Vijayanagar Kingdom. When the group reached the entrance of the temple for beholding the deity, they were stopped by the pandas and pujaris of the temple, saying that only those who were wearing 'tripunda tilak'* could enter the temple, those, with urdhva punda, i.e. Vaishnavas should not. In those days, there was a friction between Shaivas and Vaishnavas. Vaishnavas were insisting that

the temple was that of the Vaishnavas. Shaivas were merely entitled to perform the service and worship. Swamiji had taken this holy trip to propagate the message of unity and equality. He raised his 'south threaded conch' and blew it. Hearing the supernal sound, the hearts of all the pandas and pujaris opened up. They felt ashamed. An astonishing spectacle came before their vision. The entire universe was decorated with tripundra on its forehead." Experiencing this miracle, the pandas and the pujaris realised the truth and removed all the obstacles to their entry in to the temple. They accepted this as the command of the Lord Ashutosh -Shiva. Going ahead, the pandas and pujaris welcomed them according to the rituals of Shaivas, worshipped with lamps and recitations and honoured them wholeheartedly. Then Swamiji said, "Those having immense love within them understand those who are having love within their hearts. Those who are devout, serve the devout. Vastness of the heart is a priceless virtue. Same are those who know the significance of this principle and behave accordingly."

All the people who had gathered there heard the words of religious equality from Swamiji and started praying Swamiji with emotions for the vastness of his contentions and his kindness. All the pujaris and saints took his words respectfully and made a promise for harmony. Swamiji was considered as a great yogi and the saints and pujaris served him with all reverence. The Vaishnavas also praised him. It was a surprising spectacle of unity between the Shaivas and Vaishnavas that marked the situaiton.

On the request of the people of Rameshwaram, in order to establish unity between the Shaiva and the Vaishnava factions, Swamiji said, "My disciple Yoganand will stay here and strengthen the bond of unity." Yoganand raised both his hands and expressed his greetings to all. "The one who installed the idol of Shiva and worshiped him is Vaishnav himself as was the Vaishnav - Rama. In view of this, this holy place belongs as much to Vaishnavas as to Shaivas. Shiva accepts the worship of the Vaishnavas. Then is it proper to desist them? Shiva is the greatest Vaishnava himself." Before leaving, Swamiji's troupe went to see Dhanushkoti and Rama sethu. After seeing Rama Sethu Swamiji said, "Ramasethu is our cultural treasure. It is the great example of technological skill of the ancient scientists. It is symbolically the victory of the religious over the sinners. It should be protected in all respects. The irreligious powers are bent upon with all their might to darkness and blacken our bright history, destroying our marks of honour and trying to wipe out the ancient heritage. We should remain united and work against such attempts."

On this the Shaivas and the Vaishvas present proclaimed their support and welcomed the idea.

Raja Bukka Rai had decorated Vijay Nagar beautifully for according a warm welcome to Swamiji. All along the route, decorated arches were erected. There were deeortations of flowers and garlands. Arrangements for the stay of the troupe members had been made in a spacious garden. There was a lake in the middle of the park. Big bathing ghats had been constructed there. Vidyaranya Swami was a religious person who was well-known there. He was also present along with the king to welcome Swamiji. Swamiji had reached the boundary of the city with his troupe. King Bukka Rai and Sage Vidyaranya Swami walked through city bare feet and welcomed Swamiji and his disciples. They both asked the brahmacharis to leave and they themselves bore the palanquin on their shoulders showing their gratitude and love towards Swamiji. The party rested by the side of the lake in the garden adorned with beautiful flowers.

During the evening discourse, Swamiji addressed the king and other present there, and said, "Rajayog and Bhoga never go together. Presence of bhoga in Rajayog is fatal. The kings who had indulged in bhoga lost their kingdom and their dynasty. The king should always take care of the people with rules with extreme control over self-indulgence." The King was so impressed by Swamiji's thought that he got it inscribed on a bhurja - leaf, enclosed in a golden amulet and wore it on his arm. Swamiji remained in Vijayanagar for nine days. The king attentively listened to his discourses every day. He became convinced that he too was a yogi in his previous birth. King's heart-ailment was getting cured as he was taking payasa from Swamiji as his blessings.

On the other side, Kabir, during his work of unifying people, took the minister of the kingdom into his confidence. The minister already belonged to Vishishthadwaiti sect, which helped to render their intimacy stronger. For nine days, the troupe participated in feasts by different societies, enjoyed the variety of rich food of the royal hospitality and tasted the delicious payasa. At last, the troupe left for Kanchipuram. The King Bukka Rai, the sage Vidyaranya Swami and the vast number of devotees accompanied the troupe upto the boundary of the kingdom and honoured them. The sage Vidyaranya prayed Swamiji to visit Kanchi once again, and bowed in reverence. The king very humbly touched his feet. The King's minister who had become a regular participant in Kabir's satsang, following the king's orders took care of Swamiji's comfortable

travel and safety personally, upto Kanchi. The followers found it sad to return, they did with a heavy heart. Wherever Swamiji took rest in the long journey, a sacred sensation of devotion for Lord Rama had filled in the atmosphere.

In Vishnu Kanchi, the pujaris of Sri Ranganatha temple were quarrelling among themselves on the point of greatness of their brahminity. They were indulging in the whims of divisive thoughts. Based on castes they were busy dividing the society into different sects. The devil of superiority of ego was eroding the integrity of the nation in an deplorable manner. As insignificant persons Kabir who was a weaver and Raidas a cobbler were humiliated by them. They were not allowed to enter the temple. Swamiji tried his best to make those ignorant persons understand the significance of Religion. He even said, "Our culture is such that we worship with care even grasses like 'kusha' and animals like 'cow'. Then, why should there be a wall between humans?" The extremists had damaged all the preparations for welcoming Swamiji and his devotees. They launched a tirade against them. The whole surrounding turned poisonous and polluted, so much so that the real devotees who had come to see Swamiji could neither see him nor listen to him. They hid themselves in a corner cursing their ill fate. Seeing the trouble, Swamiji used his brahmastra and blew his conch. That spiritual sound brought peace all over. Swamiji disappeared from the scene and made his appearance inside the sanctum sanctorum of Lord Ranganatha. Lord Ranganatha was quite pleased. He extended his hand to welcome, drew him close and embraced him. The pujari who was there in the worship of the Lord saw the divine sight. He remained spellbound. Feeling sorry for his mistakes, he fell at Swamiji's feet and begged his pardon. In a short time, this news spread all over Kanchi. The religious people of Kanchi crowded the premises of the temple. They were anxious to have the vision of Swamiji. Then Swamiji came out of the sanctum sanctorum and gave darshan to the assembly. He gave meaningful teaching, 'All the creation of nature is the consequence of the Lord's desire to become many from one. When the creation is filled with God's existence, how can there be an existence of duality about that very uniqueness? Since the qualities only are being transformed into other qualities, isn't the pride of taking credit of performing rituals futile? He is the one who, according to his plan, gets the things done. Nothing is inferior or superior when done with devotion to the Supreme Power. The hatred between one human being and another is the consequence of lack of knowledge, lack of justice and arrogance. This is gross misconduct.

The Supreme Lord is hungry for love. He is expecting dedication and devotion. Any deed done with dedication and devotion becomes his worship. Then who is touchable and who is untouchable? Even the thought about it is filled with rudeness. Finally there is nothing like caste or creed. He who worships the Lord becomes his own person. You are devotees of God and you are preventing the other devotees of God from entering his temple. This is not what Lord Ranganath has directed. This is the result of arrogance. Arrogance is the biggest obstacle in the union with God. Today the country's religion is in miserable state. In such a situation, hatred, and differences which are the result of arrogance are inviting danger. We should, at this juncture remain united strongly on one platform of coordination. The slogan of equality should be raised like the roaring of a lion. All should be united. All should stand with a strong will. Then only the country can face the messenger of the destroyer, the atrocities committed by irreligious persons in the society. When the temple remains safe, your worship also will remain safe. Then the cows and brahmins will remain safe." When Swamiji ended his discourse, the audience raised slogans of victory and allowed the troupe of Swamiji to enter and pray to the Deity inside the temple. All of them became sages by self realisation. The feeling of difference and hatred had vanished. All worshipped and returned.

The troupe was moving towards north of Vishnu Kanchi. Nearby, there lived one scholar named Mulaprabh. He was very much taken by the stories of miracles of Swamiji. He undertook the responsibility of the troupe's arrangement. He prepared delicious payasa for Swamiji. Next day, the sage Vidyaranya Swami and the minister arrived there. They were sad over the previous day's incident. The minister begged Swamiji's pardon for the mistake. Then Swamiji said, "Such untoward events have to happen. They happen at God's will and command. No one can stop them." On this, Vidyaranya Swami raised a question, "Will the supreme director God make some arrangement at such difficult situation?" Swamiji said, "Yes, the sloka 'Paritranaya Sadhunam Vinashayacha dushkrutam, Dharma Sansthapanarthaya sambhavami yuge yuge" is the proof from sacred Gita. The path of protection of religion will definitely be cleared by the Lord." These words of Swamiji brought satisfaction to Vidyaranya. Then, Swamiji gave him a flower and said, "Look at the petals with concentration. You can visualise your personality very clearly." The sage Vidyaranya was amazed at seeing his future in that divine flower. He felt happy and touched Swamiji's feet. In between in different locations, satsang discourses were being held by Swamiji and his disciples.

After leaving Kanchi, Swamiji's religious journey reached the mountain of Girnar. There Nawab of Junagadh was inducing the Shaivas and the Jains to quarrel between themselves on the question of ownership of the samadhis of the shaiva saints on the mountain. The Nawab, with the help of the police had brought these samadhis under the possession of the Jains. Swamiji did not involve himself in this debate. He went to the temple of goddess on the top. From there, to see the footstep signs of God Dattatreya, he went high up on the mountain.

From there, the troupe straightaway reached Dwarka via Somnath. Dwarka residents gave a hearty welcome to Swamiji. They visited Dwarkadhisha at Dwarka. Then bathed in the Gomati River. They enjoyed the waves of the sea. Sita, the devoted wife of saint Peepaji was so overwhelmed at the sight of Dwarkadhish that she requested Swamiji to take her to Lord Krishna. Sant Peepaji was also there. Swamji said, "In order to see Lord Krishna, both of you should jump into the sea." For Peepaji, the words of Guru were like a divine commandment and there was no question of any denial. The husband and wife both went and instantly jumped into the sea. Lord Krishna saved them. Rukmini took them to the palace and entertained them well. With a choked voice Peepaji said, "One who gets drowned in the sea of love for the Lord does not ever get drowned in the illusory material world. I realised this truth today." Then slowly Sita, said to Peepaji, "How will the people outside believe that we have come back after seeing Lord Krishna?" Krishna heard this. He imprinted upon them the signs of his conch and the wheel. Before leaving Peepaji and Sita bowed and touched the feet of Krishna and Rukmini and said, "We have given you great trouble." The Lord embraced them and sent them back to earth. The whole troupe was waiting for their return. As they came, Peepaji touched the feet of his Guru and said, "You have given us the divine vision of Lord Krishna. We have received the ultimate reward of our life." Then one saint said, "What is the proof for your having seen the Lord", upon which he showed the imprint of conch and the wheel and convinced them.

Swamiji stayed in Dwarka for seven days. He described the oneness of Rama and Krishna. He gave a spiritual philosophical analysis of the Krishna's youthful artistic plays in his feeling words. The residents of Dwarka were thrilled at these thoughts. Swamiji said to Peepa, "If you desire to return to Gagaron, you may. You have already achieved self-realisation. Sita also has completed the southern trip." Sant Peepa said,

"As Gurudev wishes." and obediently went back to Gagaron. The group then visited the cave of Bhaktahari on top of Mount Abu and then took bath in the Pushkar Lake and reached Vrindavan of Rameshwar Dham. In Vrindavan, Swamiji envisioned the children to experience Krishna's existence in them. Everyday they enjoyed feasts. Once a girl came to the feast. Swamiji saw the beauty and the sweet voice with extreme humility and saw in her Radha herself. Her serene beauty made Swamiji filled with emotion. He fed the girl with payasa that was brought for him. The next day, Swamiji gave a grand feast to all the girls of Vrindavan. This brought praises and devotion towards Swamiji in every house in Vrindavan.

From Vrindavan, Swamiji and his troupe reached Haridwar. In Haridwar, he gathered all his disciples to attend the worship of the sacred Ganga. There they witnessed an astounding incident. Two godly men with muscular and impressive physique speaking in Sanskrit, came to the tent of Swamiji and were asking for 'Bhiksha' (food). The disciples wished to send them away after giving some food; but they were reluctant to go away. They were demanding the fruits of three trees and grains of five kinds of cereals. Their eyes were large, opening and closing. They threw up their sticks into the air and started frightening them. Then, Swamiji blew his conch from inside the tent. Hearing the sound, they went into trance, but their sticks were not leaving them. Anantananda and others started identifying them. Then Swamiji came out of his tent and woke them up. "Oh, Ocean of mercy, Welcome." Opening their eyes, when they perceived Swamiji, they got immersed in the ocean of joy. Swamiji went ahead and embraced them. He offered them the worship at a mental level and procured the things they wanted with his yogic power and offered it to them. Satisfied, they said, 'You were going to see our vision at Badrikashram. In order to save the long hazardous journey, we, Nara and Narayan, ourselves have come here for you." So saying, they disappeared.

From Haridwar, the pilgrims returned to Vrindavan. This time Swamiji wanted to see not only Radha but both Radha and Krishna taking food together. He wanted to accomplish this unfulfilled desire. He believed that Vrindavan is the blissful land and in each particle of that land is hidden Lord Krishna softly lifting the minds the illusioned with gross materiality, towards spirituality.

Next day, Swamiji fed the children of Vrindavan. At that time a young beautiful girl carrying a pitcher filled with water from Yamuna on her head came there. She gave the vessel to a disciple and said, "The boys are

being given food. What wrong have the have done? Where did they come from?" When this news reached Swamiji, on the third day Swamiji hosted a feast for a group of girls and boys. When the boys and girls sat down in separate rows and were eating food, there came a fair complexioned girl and a dark handsome boy together. They sat down in the respective rows and saoured the food. Then they came to Swamiji who was enjoying their childish pranks by walking amidst them. They said, "Baba, won't you treat us with some payasa?" Swamiji understood that they were not beings, but Radha and Krishna in disguise. He said, "Wait, I am bringing." Quickly he went and brought the payasa which he gave them and sat with them. Swamiji saw the happiness and in his heart of hearts he got lost in extremely joyous emotions. After relishing the payasa, they both disappeared. The very desire of Swamiji for which he had come to Vrindavan was fulfilled.

From Vrindavan, the yatra reached Chitrakoot, through Naimisharanya. The troupe camped between the sacred river Mandakini and the holy land of Kamad Giri. Swamiji liked Chitrakoot. He completed his chaturmasa there. He also completed circumbulation of Kamad Giri. At the end of it Swamiji experienced a wonderful moment of beatitude but a divine musical sound brought him back to the material world. In the satsang, apart from the saints and priests of Chitrakoot, there was a large number of men and women of Kirat community. During the chaturmasa, in his discourses Swamiji showered such ambrosia from with his intellect and charismatic speech that Chitrakoot once again reverberated with Rama nama. From there, Swamiji walked and stayed one night in Prayag and then reached Kashi. By that time others in the religious journey were tired too. Reaching Kashi he worshiped Vishwanath, Kalabairav, Vindumadhav and other deities. Then once again he started giving discourses at the Satsang Bhavan of Shrimath everyday.



Ten

The news of Swamiji's return from his pilgrimage brought limitless joy to all in Kashi. All the devout citizens, young and old, men and women had already taken their seats in large number at Shrimath. The banks of the Ganga resounded with the slogans of Swamiji's glory. As Swamiji got down from the palanquin, women worshipped him with lighted lamps to welcome him back. At the end of the worship, people thronged to touch his feet. Saint Yoganand, who had already returned to Kashi from Rameshwaram, made his path through the big crowd with some difficulty and led Swamiji inside the hermitage. Acharya Anantananda, Kabirdas and Raidas had already reached the hermitage. They had decorated a platform for Swamiji in the Satsang Bhavan. When Swamiji took his seat, once again the shouts of glory a rose in Shrimath. It was a heartwarming sight. On one side the ladies and on the other the gents took their seats. All were anxious to hear about the 'holy pilgrimage' that Swamiji had undertaken. Acharya Anantananda first thanked the people of Kashi for such a warm welcome. He narrated the miracles exhibited by Swamiji at various places and kept the audience spell bound with wonder and joy. He narrated the incidents at Ranganath Temple and at Vrindavan. The fervour of devotion amongst the crowd was great indeed. He narrated the events at Rameshwaram and Haridwar which added new proofs of Swamiji's divinity. The entire hall was a scene filled with zeal and emotions taking form of sounds of slogans and clapping. Acharya Anantananda raised both his hands and requested the audience to be calm. Paying his respects in highly esteemed words, he requested Swamiji to offer his blessings to the crowd. When Swamiji blew his conch, silence spread over the entire crowd. All the eyes were fixed on the glorious face of Swamiji. In his nectar-like voice, he addressed the audience briefly:

"India has always been a spiritual country. Right since the creation, it has taken the task to search deep for everlasting truth and eternal happiness for the benefit of mankind. Everyone had been given the freedom for such exploration. Whenever the human race had got into distress, one or the other great man took incarnation to uplift them and reestablished

glory of religion. It is sad that the people forgot the Supreme Lord and established their own sects merely by installing the idols of the great men. It was not bad to start a seet, but taking pride in one's superiority, creating hereditary hatred and living with the feeling of detestation is not only bad but is a crime. Where there should have been a stream of equality, there is an ocean of bitterness with waves of dancing terror. Each community considers itself as superior and live in hatred of others. The people abhor one another. Internal disputes between communities have brought a serious crisis in religion and society in our country. Everyday, the regime of battle or fright spreads, results in bloodsheds, one community is seen insulting and harming the symbols and rituals of other community. They do not respect ideals and principles of others, simply tease them. The arrogance that one's own community's principles are superior has become so menacing that peace seems to be absent altogether. This phenomenon is widespread in the South. But the deities in the temples of the South have embraced me with their hands. Lord Krishna and Radha ate the food of my offering from my hands at Vrindavan in the guise of gopa and gopika. The Almighty Lord does not discriminate. Whoever has remembers him with full devotion has become His.

"During the religious journey, this body has been propagating unity amongst humans, view of equality and the devotion to the only Supreme Lord. This body has destroyed the communal tension. The doors of the temple have been opened for all. "Who worships Hari, becomes His" is the mantra I have given with advice to forget discriminations of untouchability, the high - and - the low etc. One should follow religion and proceed towards spirituality. This will lead everyone towards liberation. You have welcomed me on my return with heartfelt emotions, for which the Lord will bestow upon you eternal bliss."

Acharya Anantananda announced that Swamiji had organised a feast for three days, without consideration of any discriminations. "All of you are invited. All the three days, you will hear his sweet discourse and the sound of his conch, bringing you profound happiness."

During the days of the feast, Swamiji received a letter from Vidyaranya Swami, the royal Veda Scholar of Vijayanagar. Vidyaranya had written, "Inspired at your behest, the explanation of the Vedas has been undertaken, but occasionally the hidden meanings put us in dilemma. Veterans have decided to undertake the writing. We have also identified unwarranted sentimental involvements and have removed them in order to be be

unprujidiced. However the writing is not taking the desired shape. Perhaps godly endowment of talent is required for writing on the godly knowledge. Kindly grant us the godly talent." Swamiji was pleased to read the latter. He wrote in his reply -

"The reason for the obstacles in your work is your ignorance towards Goddess of Knowledge - Saraswati. Your writing to me a letter depicts your politeness and humility, otherwise the egoistic attitude does not allow one to go to the root of the principles. Pride does not allow the divine knowledge to manifest. A feeling of devoutness should be imbibed in mind. So long as you do not strengthen faith in God, the divine talent will not come out, nor will you be able to do justice to your writing on the Vedas. You will not be able to reach the spirituality hidden behind the words. Keep practicing the Shabda - Surati - Yoga woven with Rama Nama, you will attain the state of poised equilibrium. Have faith.

"There is no duality between the Lord and the creation. Nature is the manifestation of the Lord. This is the illusionary effect of the Lord through which he wishes to create infinite number of expressions. The soul apparently appearing in different bodies is in fact one. The enjoyment of the treasure in the nature is subject to its sacrifice. The sacrifice should be that of material happiness, which is the deformity of the Creator. The nature need not be sacrificed. Experiencing the indivisibility is a pleasure of nectar which can be experienced by sacrificing our dogmas. Existence of 'one' and 'many', both are truths. Both are principally one. The cause is one and the effects are many. The visible appearance in fact is the unique creator which dwells in the illusion created by himself. When this knowledge permeates us and everything appears unique, it is the state of realisation of appearance of godly intellect with us. It is the connoisseur who can relish the juice. It is the exponent of Brahma knowledge who is entitled to have the blissful existence. Truth and the non-existence are one and the same. Whoever grasps this secret; reaches the state of Supreme Brahman. The experience of this spiritual secret brings about the spiritual talent which is even rare to the gods. This state will automatically expound the secret of the Vedas.

Keep writing. Your interpretation of the Vedas will be certainly considered as authentic." Swamiji sent the letter to Vidyaranya through a despatcher.

Seeing people sitting in a line, the Swamiji said, "When I see God

taking food through thousands faces, my heart gets overwhelmed. I get emotional. It is very difficult not to memorise such joyful sight. Have mercy to come for the feast and give me satisfaction. My joy has no bounds."

Then, an old saint sitting nearby said, "How is it possible for one to keep a black serpent of mutual distrust and hatred in one's mind after coming to such a spiritual temple. How is it possible not to get sanctified by relishing its uniqueness."

Swamiji said, "The recognition of spirituality removes the mean narrow mentalities. The traditions of society today are frighteningly miserable and very much grief-stricken. Only the saints are capable to get over this situation. The community of the sages should come forward and take responsibility as the successors of the Guru".

Then Bhatarakji, who had had his food and washed his hands, stood up and said, "I spent my entire life at the feet of the Lord. I am happy today to have taken this great offering. I have lost all the prejudices and biases of my mind and my mind has been expanded to think with broader perspective. O Lord, had there not been the bestowal of mercy from you, how could I have got this vision of knowledge? My eyes were suffering in the darkness? Give me the orders and the energy. I am ready to sacrifice myself in this great sacrificial fire of unity."

After the lunch, all the invited guests gathered around Swamiji. Jinu Bhagat came near him and asked, "Swamiji, what is the cost of happiness?"

"Selflessness is the cost of happiness. Performance of one's duty leads one to the absence of the ego, the state where Supreme Soul exists." On this Jinu Bhagat asked again, "How the absence of ego be brought about, Swamiji?" Then Swamij answered with a smile, "Did you not perceive the absence of ego when you sat with all others in one line to take your lunch?" Hearing this answer, all present raised a slogan, "Be blessed, Be blessed.", and eyed Jinu Bhagat with some ridicule. Jinu Bhagat became silent. Then Swamiji raised the conch and produced the sweet sound. All reached the glory of spiritual ecstasy. Swamiji went back inside the cave, chanting "Ram - Ram - Jai - Siya - Ram". Acharya Anantananda and the other disciples present there, bid farewell to all the saints who came as invitees, with due honour. All these saints praised Swamiji for the happiness they got and returned to their hermitages.

After the three days, one evening a genius in poetry - Sudhigan, came there reciting his poems. He had brought a composition in praise of Swamiji. His ego in the poem had become so forceful that he did not recognise greatness in others. His feet did not remain on the earth. As he set his feet in the hermitage and recognizing Swamiji's achievement, divinity and knowledge, his ego melted away. Entering the hermitage, he humbly expressed his desire for the divine glimpse of Swamiji. Acharya Anantananda informed Swamiji about it. Swamiji mercifully came out from behind the curtain. The poet, Sudhigan touched his feet as he came out. Swamiji embraced him and made him sit by his side on a wooden seat. Swamiji had great love for poets, from the very beginning. He believed that poets, with the medium of language, could pass on everlasting civilisation to the future generation. The poet is a performer of pure culture. Yogi concentrates on the words whereas the poets concentrate more on the meaning. He was the superior writer, exponent of the truth and messenger of eternal knowledge. Sudhigan was a poet composing poetry in Sanskrit. Swamiji too loved Sankrit. It was only for the purpose of organising people that he used to resort to vernacular language. He therefore respected Sudhigan. The poet was gratified with the sacred vision of Swamiji for the first time. Politely and courteously he said, "Swamiji the way you have presented the principle of equality during the pilgrimage, India's spiritual vision has been strengthened. You have unified the deities of different sects. You have opened the gates of temples to all. This has created a profound feeling of patriotism in the minds of people."

"Dear poet, people keep coming to this hermitage either with a desire for salvation or to get cured from diseases.

Their thoughts do not rise from Muladhar* to Vignanamaya state. I can see within you the sentiments of sadness and concern for the deteriorating situation the religion is going through in the country. Whatever I have done through my journey, you can do it through your words. Words have great power."

"Gurudev, you have beautifully analysed the duty of a poet and given me guidance. I consider myself merely a gardener in a garden of words, always weaving garlands of words. I have composed some such garlands in your praise and shall be grateful if you will permit me to recite them."

"O, the son of Goddess Saraswati! Already you have praised me so much. Is there anything more?"

"Swamiji, the feelings woven with the melody, tune, music appear beautifully and pleasing to the ear."

"There is truth in what you say. The music by itself is God's blessing. Musically composed poem multiplies its intensity.

Well said. What have you brought?"

Poet Sidhigan recited his poem. He got totally immersed in the melody of harmonious tones. The meaning was: "You yourself are Jagadguru, the educator of the world. Your talks are depicting the eternal truth, establishing principles of humanity. It carries the nectar of India's spirituality, which the society has forgotten. You are the sun of knowledge. The illumination of your knowledge has been effective in eradicating the darkness of differences which has spread over the minds of the citizens of this country. Your sweet words of wisdom have enlightened the knowledge in their minds. You have spread the message of welfare and brotherhood. You yourself are the supreme knowledge and remain in the ultimate ecstatic state. Only saints like you, preaching non-duality can blow the conch of equality amongst the dualities. You only can destroy the hatred prevailing amongst the population and create a unified society. You are blessed. I bow before your immensity."

Once, a generous feast for the saints had been offered at Shrimath on the banks of the Ganga. To that feast, saints sages and teachers of all hermitages in Kashi were invited according to the custom. As indicated by Swamiji, the first disciple Anantananda instructed Kabir, Raidas, Yoganand and other enlightened disciples to spread out plates of leaves for serving the guests and waited for them to arrive. The new disciples made arrangements for water, for washing the feet of the guests at the entrance. The guests included saints, householders, teachers of various schools of thought, of various customs. When they took their seats and began to eat, Swamiji came out of his cave and smilingly greeted them. Seeing all the people from different customs sitting together in a line and eating, Swamiji said, "I see the Lord with thousand faces eating the food. I am thrilled and greatly moved. It is difficult to forget such happy moments. You have mercifully accepted the invitation and made me happy. My happiness has no bounds."

The divinity of Swami Ramananda was the topic for talk amongst all the people of different customs, all hermitages and all sacred places. In everyone became eager to have his vision. One after another, the groups

of saints started visiting the place. Great renounced sages, fakirs, yogis, yatis came in large numbers. There was a marvellous combination of chanting of divine names, meditation and experiencing love in Swami Parmanand's way of praying. Swami Ramananda gave a modern twist to the spiritual vision. He showed the easiest way to attain liberation. There was no necessity to walk on the sharp edge of the sword of yoga or to go to the caves of the Himalayas leaving the household commitments. It was enough to live in renounciation, with the longing for the meeting the Almighty by uttering the short and sweet name of Lord Rama while standing, sitting, eating, drinking, inhaling and exhaling. Swami Ramananda had opened the doors of the hermitage for the whole society and its people with an intention to unite all the groups of people and to save the religion and culture. His spirituality, feeling of equality and his recognition of all religions, above all, his sweet discourses full of wisdom as well as the sound of the conch which charged the atmosphere with vital energy and his divine darshan - made the people thrilled. The devotees experienced a divine rapture and had visions of the supernal world. Defining the six visions as enunciated in the Brahma sutra, Upanishads and the eighteen chapters of the Gita, Swamiji revealed the nature of Brahma Vidya - the supreme knowledge. Disciples were reluctant to leave the discourses. Their only desire was to listen to it no matter how long it went on. Very easily he would arouse the desire to aspire for knowledge within a person and making him understand the nature of the Brahma vidya. He would even touch the heart of an illiterate. He said one has to reach the gate of the Almighty Lord with a serene mind, and reciting, there is the Supreme Power to recognise one's penance. He is the one cognizent of one who deserves and who doesn't. Swami Ramananda had named his simple yoga as Shabda Surati Yoga.

The sound of Swamiji's conch silenced even the enemies. Their intention to attack always turned into surrender. They became his disciples in the end and transformed their lives into blissful devotion. Once, a religious teacher called Riliha from the western part of the country sent two of his disciples to Swamiji to achieve the state of ultimate peace. Under disguise of a serpent and a tiger, they entered Kashi at sunset. The whole city came under fear. The security guards ran after them to catch them, but they were turned back by roaring and hissing and saved their lives by running aware. The two came to Shrimath when a large number of devotees were sitting. Seeing them, they ran for safety, but the enlightened disciples calmed them down and removed their fear. Acharya Anantananda

could recognise them and requested them to come back in human form. When they appeared in human form, Anantananda made them seated for satsang with respects. At that time, Swamiji was in his evening meditation.

When the meditation ended, the two disciples stood up immersed in an extreme state of oneness with the supreme soul and started dancing in joy. They danced and danced to the entrance of the cave and stood there. As soon as Swamiji came out, the two bowed down to touch his feet and prostrated. Getting up, they raised shouts of victory, keeping their hands folded. Swamiji sat on the wooden seat and enquired about them and the purpose of their visit. One of them said, "O, Holiness, the purpose for which our great Guru Riliha sent us at your service has been accomplished just by seeing you and hearing the sound of the conch. Our honoured Guru has given us the knowledge of the soul, and also the knowledge of the rituals, however it is with your blissful vision that we have realised that the state of enlightenment is not achievable unless one sanctifies one's actions by the sacred fire of knowledge. There is no other Guru more profound and kind as you. You have liberated us, now no other desire exists. They touched Swamiji's feet and asked permission to leave. Swamiji said, "Please give a message to your Guru that he should continue to liberate the lives sunk in material world by using his yogic powers". Paying respects to Swamiji, they left the hermitage in an ecstatic state.

Similarly, another historical event occurred. This event related the period of Mahabharata straight to Swami Ramananda. Once a conservative exponent of religious rituals named Bharuki was bitten by a snake. He took all kinds of medicines and tried a large number of herbs, but it was of no avail. His body remained motionless. At last he died. His two sons and his wife were Swamiji's devotees. They had faith in Swamiji's powers. They took the dead body to Swamiji. The kind-hearted Swamiji blew his conch and the dead Bharuki opened his eyes. As he came back to life, end the angry serpent appeared in the hermitage furiously hissing. It took the form of a brahmin and said, "This pundit is the enemy of our sect. In every birth, he gets bitten by us and dies. This cruel man acquired the knowledge of sarpa-sastra* and destroyed our community during the period of Mahabharata. By making him alive, you have invited destruction of our lives. In our custom, we do not bite a person who has been given life by a sacred Power. You are such one. I am unable to express how deeply I am hurt. You will not imagine the fire of anguish that is burning within me."

Swami Ramananda heard and calmly said, "O, king of serpents, take

this as God's will. He has shown mercy on him through me. It is not good for you to keep burning the enmity with anyone through generations. You should be happy that the doors of heaven are kept open for this man and Shesh bhagwan the Divine Heavenly Serpent himself is standing there as the door keeper. You must end your custom here itself. All these lives you have been biting him, isn't that enough? Cool down, do not give vent to your revenge funless any more."

The serpent in the form of a brahmin said, "You have liberated this person by your mercy. Now be kind to liberate me too." So saying the serpent in the brahmin's disguise touched his feet. The event not only connected Dwapar Yug with the Kali Yug, but showed Swamiji's kindness for all in the universe. Swamji's mercy was not only for the humans but even birds and beasts.

Apart from such extraordinary and miraculous deeds, Shrimath had daily feasts organised by Swamiji. Liberated, saints, enlightened sages and householders participated in them. The poor man in distress, beggars, and women from the lower castes - all alike partook of the feast. This five kilometres area In Kashi was a centre of glory. Occasionally, even Maha Kaleswar attended the feast in the form of a beggar. This place became the centre for feasts, residence for saints, sheds for cows, gardens and place for worship. This hermitage was protector of eternal religion during the lifetime of Swamiji.



Eleven

The task accomplished by Swami Ramananda has been inscribed in history in golden letters. He offered his life for protection and salvation to humanity, granting spiritual powers for the sake of the religion and culture. His south threaded conch and its sound was an integral part of this great yogi. His mother was offered that conch as a blessing from Lord Venimadhav. Lord Venimadhav had instructed his mother to pass on that conch to her son. The conch was not really just a conch but an embodiment of the Lord's power, full of subtle energy. There was so much of spiritual power inherent in it that even a naive with no devotion experienced extreme joy in his mind. It had the ability to eliminate all the suspicion and confusions from one's mind. One used to get captured by the spell of divine experience and surrendered to Swamiji. Swamiji was great in the promulgation of devotion. He not only stopped the rising tide of irreligious atrocities like conversions, destruction of idols, kidnapping etc., but infeared the energy in the people to face it fearlessly. Like a tree after a healthy growth becomes weak and worn out one day, the human body too, becomes grey haired or wrinkled or poor visioned and leaves the earthly abode. Each soul takes the form of a body as planned by the Creator. This soul comes to earth with a definite aim and a definite purpose, and after completing that task, it returns. Swami Ramananda was the incarnation of Shri Ram himself. His appearance on this earth was for liberating humanity. Even before the evil encompassing the humanity, he had constructed a strong wall of co-coordinated devotion for protecting the religion and the society which no tyrant could break. The purpose of his incarnation was almost accomplished. He worked to create a large group of enlightened persons from among his disciples. They had the potential and the capacity to stop the oppressions occurring in future and to protect religion and the society. This was a divine task, which only a divine power could undertake.

One day, a white swan was flying in the sky, came down on the verandah of the hermitage and walked towards the cave with unhurried steps. Just behind it, a pigeon flew to the interior of the cave in an effortless

swing and perched on the lotus-like hand of Swami Ramananda. At Swamiji's signal Acharya Anantananda threw mustard grains near Swamiji's hand. The bird came down from his hand and started eating the grains. As it was eating, the bird approached Swamiji's feet and shook its wings vigorously. Within a short time, it flew away. For the swan, a pot of milk was kept. It separated the water part and consumed the milk portion. This bird too slowly walked to the cave and touched Swamiji's feet with its beak. Treating this mystery as a divine message, he said "Evamastu" (Let it be so) in reply.

Swamiji then became silent. His senior disciples understood the mystery behind his silence. A melancholy feeling appeared on the faces of the disciples. Swamiji, not wishing to disappoint them, looked at them and said, "Samyog and Viyog (meeting and separation) are mental feelings. It is all material. Look at it spiritually. No one ever takes birth, nor dies. No meeting, nor separation. No coming, no going. All This is illusion." On this Acharya Anantananda said, "O, Gurudev, in creation, there exists devotion, dedication and affection. Even if you drive them away with detachment, they don't, go away there is need to get rid of them." Then, Kabir said, "Gurudev, is there any harm in disclosing the mysterious meaning for the welfare of the people, at this time?" Swamiji said, "You know it very well. Brahmadev and Dharmaraj had come to invite me. It appears that another great person will be born to take care of this work. Or, it may also mean that the assigned performance is over. Another perspective leads us to believe that something extraordinary is in the offing. Its foundation has been laid and I must obey the order. The Supreme Lord has been anxious about our country, more than you and me. All the liberated souls would like to go over there. You have to give them only one message: Until such time new projects are introduced, things should go as earlier. Equality is the need of the hour. The unity, affection and love, which are established till now, should not get destroyed. Piercing the multiplicity we have to march ahead towards oneness. Unified strength only can bring remedy to problems. If need arises, the Creator himself shall send a new scheme." All the disciples listened to these words of the Gurudev; became silent and sadly left the place. Acharya Anantananda remained there. At a proper time, Swamiji declared to Acharya Anandanad that he has chosen the morning of the Shukla Navami of Chaitra to make his departure from this world.

With a brave heart, Acharya Anantananda called up a meeting of all

dedicated devotees of Kashi at the Satsangh Bhavan, through an invitation routed by his senior disciples Kabir and Raidas. The news did not remain a secret. The purpose of meeting was made known to all. Anantananda stood up and with a heavy heart informed all about Swamiji's decision to depart. He described to them in detail the visit of the swan and the pigeon and their purpose. Hearing the news about his planned departure, the devotees with heavy hearts wondered, what now? It was Swamiji because of whom Kashi had become a city of salvation. It was he who brought the town fame and reputation. Kashi without the Swami will be a ruined place. Anantananda consoled the gathering, saying, "Swamiji will remain with us always in a subtle form. In times of trouble, he will assist us and guide us." The words of consolation from the Acharya brought tears in the eyes of all the devotees present; they wiped their tears and tried to remain calm.

After this, Anantananda apprised them about a programme for eight days. "Saints and other devotees of Kashi and neighbouring places will be participating. This schedule will be completed everyday in four quarters. Early in the morning, all will assemble in the Satsang Bhavan to chant Rama Mantra silently sitting in the meditative pose. After that, the Virat Shri Rama Maha Yagna will be conducted. In the afternoon, Swamiji will give his discourse. At night, verses from scriptures will be read out and holy songs will be sung. On the eighth day, namely on the Ashtami day of Shukla Paksha in Chaitra, a sacrifice of one crore offerings will be performed. In the evening, there will be discourse as usual followed by a feast. All of you will have to share the responsibilities of organising this programme." Thus, everyday, the 'Sathakundeya Yagna' was conducted through well versed vedic scholars.

All the people welcomed this programme conceived by Acharya Anantananda. After prolonged discussions, three committees were appointed. Of course, everyone was sad at heart, but physically, they worked zealously to make the programme a success. All of them worked with full energy to carry out their part of the responsibilities. All longed to have the last glance of the Swamiji. They worked sincerely, with a desire in their hearts to get the blessings from Swamiji for the last time.

Right from the Amavasya of Chaitra, there was a huge attendance of people coming from far end near. Swamiji's daily routine was going on as per his normal schedule. He was neither worried about his departure nor happy. He remained as before, close to his soul. He did not have the feeling either of attachment or dejection. Same was his meditation, same

was the of blowing the conch. Same was the manner of conducting satsanga and same were the blessings. No change whatsoever. He made it a point to ask on the day of Amavasya, from where the people have come, whether their lodging arrangements have been made properly, whether arrangements for their meals have been proper. Was the Satsang Bhavan sufficient to accommodate? Anantananda explained to him about all the arrangements and found him satisfied.

All the saints, sages and devotees had taken their bath on the "Pratipada*" day, reached the Satsangh Bhawan in time. With their spines straight, and eyes closed, they sat in 'jnana mudra*'* in a line and began chanting the Rama mantra silently. An indescribable peace prevailed, as if the sky had descended on earth. It was a mesmerizing scene of thousands of dedicated persons in unmoving meditation. It was the conch blown inside the cave which brought an unfading pleasure to them. They opened their eyes to feel as if they have returned from some other world of pure joy. They admired the glory of the joy and felt a sense of fulfilment of their lives.

A spacious discourse hall had been arranged. All attended at the scheduled time. Acharya Anantananda asked them to be seated in proper order. Arrangements for women-saints were made on the left side and male disciples were on the right side. Anantananda said, "You will hear the sound of the conch and then Swamiji will arrive. You will stand up to greet him and get seated after Swamiji takes his seat. Till the arrival of the Swamiji, Saint Surasuranand will sing Rama-nama. The whole pandal echoed with the sound "Siyaram, siyaram, siyaram, siyaram." The letters "Ra' and 'ma" transformed the whole environment into blissful waves of Rama nam. Sadhakas found themselves deeply immersed in those undying waves of sweet tune. Then came the sound of the conch. Soulfulness, integrity and indivisibility created such an atmosphere that everyone saw the vision of Lord Rama in the other person. A mysterious experience of uniqueness was suffused, as if an appeal from one soul to another. Seeing Swamiji arrive, Saint Sursuranand concluded Rama nama tune and stood up. Swamiji entered and all stood up. Before taking seat on the platform, Swamiji uttered the name of Lord Rama. Acharya Anantananda who was standing close by signalled all to take their seats.

Before the discourse, Swamiji again uttered the name of 'Siyaram' and silence hovered over the audience. Eager to listen to Swamiji all eyes were fixed unto him. Swamiji said in a slow and sweet voice. "It is about

one hundred and eleven years that I have come here. In my sixteenth year itself, my revered Guru gave me mantra diksha and granted me a new life. The entire credit for the stage at which I am now goes solely to my revered Guru." (So saying, he closed his eyes and showed his respect and regard silently at the feet of his guru).

"Everyone desires to get liberation. It accepts the non-permanence of the material world, and recognizes that Brahman as the unique creator, conservator and destroyer. This dispassionate intellect protects one from the consequences of his deeds and entitles him for liberation. Effects of deeds get nullified after one lakh eighty four thousand trips of life after life to finally clear the path for liberation. You all have accepted this knowledge on the level of your intellect and have been implementing it too. Your arrival at Shrimath itself is the proof of it. It is imperative to perform the routine deeds. It is the religion of the body where the inner consciousness remains as a witness. When the inner consciousness itself becomes operative, then it is essential to have renounciation, selflessness and the sense of sacrifice so that the work does not became a compulsion. The Lord himself is getting every work done. We work at his inspiration, we are accomplishing the objective which He has directed. Acceptance of this fact flushes off the pride. This is the selflessness. There is a verse in Ishopadanishad* -

"All this visible universe is covered with the sole unique God. Has the wealth accompanied anyone? Do not be greedy. Enjoy it with due sacrifice."

It is an extremely educative verse. Not only from the greed of wealth, one has to protect himself from all the six enemies. Religious scriptures have stipulated five values of life to protect you. Truth, non-violence, non-stealing, renunciation and chastity. These should be adorned in the life. Nature is made of atoms and every atom has three qualities of Sattva, Raja and Tama; they only decide the nature of a man. The material world has the life due to the touch of Brahman as the atoms get activated. This is why it is called God's illusionary world. This is the reason why Brahman is spirit and matter too. The whole universe is therefore an embodiment of Brahman. He only is the cause of this universe. He only is occupying the body and He is the creator and He only is the enjoyer. The life being illusionary, is Satvik*, Rajasi and Tamasik. 'Sat' releases the living being from impure and takes him to purity. This illusion is closely related to Brahman, however it is Brahma who dwells in everything and controls

them. This is the reason why spirituality and non-spirituality are both the qualities of Brahman as it is Brahman who is the controller of the subtle cause and gross effect, hence both are inseparable, unique. This is the reason why our religious principles are called Vishishthadwait, i.e. qualified uniqueness. He is occupying the throne in everything in the form of spiritual principle of the Soul. Since the material creation is devoid of the principle of intellect, its functional state is always unestablished. Man being the supreme at the intellect level in his body, his conscience, rationality and decision making is always functional. Every living being has the inquisitiveness to know the secret of the universe. It is in this context that every living being has a natural desire to attain the state of Brahman. The soul and the Supreme Soul are one. Whoever has seen the Soul, has seen the Supreme soul. Irresistible desire to see the Supreme Soul is called devotion. The Supreme Soul is in the form of eternal joy. He is the all powerful, all-knowing, all pervading. Intense love for him arouses the desire to attain him. This devotional love only takes him unto him. The easiest way to attainment is Ram Nam Shabda Surati Yog. There is no other way as easy as this. Be with this sect faithfully. Vision of Divine Soul and ultimate salvation is certainly within your reach." Swamiji concluded his advice and uttered the sacred name of Lord Rama. Acharya Anantananda accompanied Swamiji back to the cave.

At night, till late, all the guests were devotedly singing the songs of praises. Everyday four types of religious activities were continuing.

In the discourse on Sunday, Swamiji imposed the responsibility of saving the society from the atrocious irreligious people and said, "You have acquired self-realization. Away from differences, you are worshiping unification. You are exponents of Advaita - the uniqueness. Only you can embrace the downtrodden, the destitutes, the weak, and the cheated and bring them back to human rights for them from the higher castes. Taking advantage of the indifference, negligence and humiliation shown towards such people, the irreligious tyrants distract and convert them. In addition, there is a sect among our society, who consider themselves as separate from the system of "Sanatana Samaj". There are still others, who indulge in adverse practices and pollute the virtuous form by treating the greed for money, fish, meat, liquor and sex as part of religion. The status of the women has become so bad that, even in a daylight, they cannot come out of their house. All good traditions are on the decline due to the sinful deeds. In such a critical time, who will think about the society? The

people have forgotten the value of unity and have got entangled in selfishness. Cruelty, anarchy and tyranny are on the climax. The protector has become the predator. The tyrants from outside have entered our country. We have lost power and it has become impossible to throw them out. However we can bring our own people, who have been divided in different sects and factions, and who have been indulging in meaningless divisions such as touchables and untouchables, on one platform. The saints can organise a society on the basis of equality. The saints having integrity have everybody as equal in their view. The Kali Kal - the almighty ruler of the present times, himself have visited me in the cave and reported the pathetic situation of the society and expressed his expectation that I should liberate them from their miseries. You all are witnesses that I have boldly broken down the olds, undesirable customs and impractical traditions and have opened the gates of the hermitage for humanity. I have embraced those who were so far called untouchables. I have saved the innocent population from the atrocities of extremists. Scriptures are witness that the incarnations of God had eaten fruits tasted by a woman of Bhila (tribals`living in jungle) caste, have stopped the evils from molesting a woman in open crowd, have declared of appearance for the purpose of annihilation of the atrocities and the cruel. Then why can't you, the enlightened saints, take the responsibility of this society? Having renounced, you can certainly be amongst the society and bring all under a healthy fraternity of equality. Today an organised society is the need of the hour. This difficult task can be undertaken by you. It is certainly not a task to be accomplished with a miracle in a day. As long as the young generation does not come forward to save the society from the terrorists, this anarchy will not come to an end. The land is trembling with fear. Greed is at its climax. The deceivers are disguised under the cloak of knowledge. This is the time when the sages who have attained the yogic power can save the ship of the society from sinking in the storm.

It i~ not enough that a noble environment has taken in the Shrimath. This should spread in the hermitages of religious authorities, in all communities and in all places of worship. You must serve the people of our own society who respect the saints and are ready to accept your commands."

Acharya Anantananda led Swamiji from the stage to the cave. This ritual was to be followed till the eightth day, i.e. Ashtami. The next day evening, as Swamiji appeared there, Saint Sursuranand concluded the

Rama nama as Swamiji sat on the dais. The audience took their seats. In that discourse Swamiji gave more importance to the achievements of the 'sadhakas*' - the followers and said,

"To see Rama in oneself and in others is compliance to nature. If a liberated person does not attain the state devoid of quality, his renunciation is meaningless. Selfless and renounced person is he who has united with God, devoid of desires and dilemma. Sacrifice of hope of the fruit itself is real sacrifice. A true sacrifice is that which sets the life free from passion. Revelation and immortal yogic state is impossible without meditation. The spirit within the routine acts, thoughts, body, breathing and every function of the nature whether in conscious or subconscious state is the sound reverberating in sound of 'R' and it is the sound of Lord Ram. The play of these words 'R' and 'M' is visible to those who have attained insight from chanting Nama and worshipping. The ancient form of 'Omkar' and its factual play of love has the base of this Rama Nama. The power ruling in every particle of the life, Shiva and the Nature and the Lord Almighty is Rama Nama. The pure alphabets R and M depicting the woven sound of Rama is an invaluable diamond. Its endowment by Guru in the form of mantra to a disciple instills within the disciple an unimaginable divine meaning. Rama Nama chanting should go on as long as the disciple actually is able to listen to its sounds in the prana - the spirit in oneself. The pure state of being devoid of any quality when one is enveloped by this sound continually is the Rama Nama. Know for yourself that as long as you hear this Rama Nama with your ears, you have not moved from the mind. The moment your ears stop listening the sound, know that your attention is not on the sound of the words, but elsewhere. Listen to the sound of Rama nama while inhaling and exhaling. Remain engrossed in it. Let the love (Surati) grow in the word (Rama), let the devotion arouse, let the yoga get unified with devotion. This devotion with love itself is Shabda Surati Yog. Unbroken status of the word itself is surati - Love. Meditating on word is meditating with yoga. Shabda Surati itself is liberation through yoga. This is an easy harmonious yoga. The extremity of love in Brahman Rama itself is Shabda Surati Yog. It is this zenith where one perceives limitless joy. Mention of Surati Shabda Yog is in Vedas too. It has chronological history right from the period of Upanishadas. It has been mentioned as pranali - method in Chandogya*. The passion to meet Brahman Rama itself is Surati on the word level. There are twenty steps in Sushumna* on crossing which the spirit reaches the fourth door. With spine erect, sitting in sukhasana or in padmasana and concentrating the

mind on Rama Nama, when one gets deeply immersed in meditation, he reaches near it. The spirit of name will descend in the heart from throat. That will be the state when every beat of your pulse will be chanting name of Rama. You will hear that sound. When the spirit further descends on Mani Chakra* you will yourself experience the divinity. From there the spirit will travel to Swadhishthan and then taking three and half circles around Muladhar, it will ignite the sleeping Kundalini power. Whole body will tremble. The spirit starts ascending and this is the new life of the disciple. From here the spirit travels from the sushamna path and reaches the forth door where it encounters the flowing air. There you will listen to the sound like thunder of clouds. Sound with vibrations of R will be audible. You will now listen to the sound of conch, then the sound of Venu. This is the eternal sound. You will behold the royal power of Rama in listening to this perpetual sound. Your spirit will become one with that Supreme spirit. This is the state of unification where you will be continuously immersed in the divine bliss. One has to meditate relentlessly to achieve the state where there will not be difference between the soul and the Supreme Soul. There will not be any duality. Infinite soulful powers will be born within you. Your gross body will be transformed into a subtle one, blissful one, you will be listening to the eternal sound. This is not any difficult process, but an easy one. What is required is your passion, greater than that of a excited departed beloved, to get lost in that supreme power. This devotion with craving of union is a lovesick devotion." Swami concluded his discourse. Moment he uttered the words Rama, it threw waves of profound serenity among the disciples who experienced it inside them. Enthusiastic devotees gave shouting slogans of praise to Swamiji.

All the scheduled activities were being carried on. Swamiji picked up a new subject for the discourse. 'The Spiritual equations which the Great Sage Badarayan imbibed sitting at Badrinath are called Brahma Sutra. The sages investigating the path of knowledge recorded the philosophical mantras in Vedas are called Upanishads. The advice given by Lord Krishna to frustrated Arjuna on Kurukshetra* in order to encourage him to fight the battle, have been recorded by Sage Ved Vyas in the Mahabharata naming it as the Gita. Brahma Sutras, Upanishadas and Gita three put together are known as 'Prasthana - Trayee*'. The unified knowledge of all these is called Vedanta, means the end of knowledge. In the Indian context, the philosophical knowledge ends at this juncture. It is essential for every disciple to study Vedanta.

Jivatma, Pradyatma and the Parmatma (Rama) are the three forms of the Parama Purusha - the Supreme Power. Jivatma is illusion of the soul, Pradyatma is soulful state and Parmatma is the joyous soul. Pradyatma is inseparable from the Parmatma. We everyday meet with Pradyatma in Sushupti. We are unable to know this union. The life is an atom. Due to inequality of the qualities, lives are different from each other. Brahman is one and is devoid of qualities. It is above this tri-quality nature. It is Saguna Brahman who blesses and tells the disciples about the nature of Nirguna Brahman. It is Guru who takes the disciple to that Nirguna Brahman. There is no other way to know Nirguna Brahman. Guru is a real Saguna Brahman. Saguna Brahma actually exists and takes one to the Nirgun Brahman, hence it is the primary desire of all the disciples. In the Shrutis Nirgun Brahman has been indicated with neutral gender and the Saguna Brahman has been indicated with masculine gender. Vision of liberated disciples goes beyond these both and identifies it. Having perceived divine vision, he sees Nirguna Brahman as Sagun and Saguna Brahman as Nirguna. For him, Sagun and Nirguna are one. Such a disciple does not discriminate between two. The dispute remains only till the seeker does not achieve the divine vision. Once the disciple gets divine vision, all his doubts vanish and he becomes beyond the duality.

Once the Jivatma attains Paramatma, it goes beyond the title or form or name. He then himself becomes Brahman and attains uniqueness. All this is the jugglery of words of definitions and of those who get engrossed in debates and disputes. Once a disciple experiences that eternal immortal joy, he attains the spirituality where there is no dispute, no doubt. It is a state where there is pure decision and nothing but decision. Disciple must always remember these six sentences. He is you, He is yours, He is like you, You are he, You are his, You are like him. This will easily make you understand about uniqueness and also strengthen the desire to attain him. This is the power in Guru Mantra. The disciple must have profound firm faith in him. It is power in Guru Mantra which takes the disciple to Brahman. Disciples must not ever doubt that power. Guru mantra comprises of the power of the Guru. Honest love only makes him to unite with honest friend. Your faith, devotion and love play significant role in this." Swamiji, then concluded his discourse and uttered the words 'Siyaram'.

Acharya Anantananda got up and as usual led Swamiji inside. The pandal echoed with slogans of praises. This was the fifth day of the eight-day schedule. There were no impediments whatsoever. All the programmes

were being conducted as per the schedule. The disciples, saints, devotees were attending with full dedication and surrender. After the morning meditation and prayers, there was Swamiji's discourse in the afternoon. All were taking keen interest in the profound theories (siddhantas). Entering the place, Swamiji took his seat on the dais and chanted Rama - nama. Complete peace spread over the audience. Everybody's gaze was fixed on Swamiji. With a serious tone he said,

"You all are the bodies with faith. You have a profound faith in that unique spiritual power in your heart. You have the soulful vision towards the material world and your behaviour is the reflection of cultural traditions. Your faith is your devotional sentiments towards the creator, creation and culture. Your faith is constructed on the base of surrender and loyalty. In brief, faith is the cultural spirit and humble behaviour of the tradition. Faith is connected to the pride of society, tradition of the culture, integrity of the nation as well as rich historical heritage. Vastness of thinking, religious behaviour and scientific proofs are its authenticity. It is connected with your predisposition. Its birth lies in acceptance of cultural traditions and its expression lies in religious behaviour. Thus the faith is not an absolute power, but a subjective thought. It is its social subjectivity only that it has perpetual hope to progress towards the vastness.

Values of faith are immortal, however its derivation is the limit of the human thought. It is this limit that continues to generate the tradition and this tradition becomes the culture. Faith is not illusion. It is not subject to time and is an everlasting truth. It is such a value that touches not only the present but past and future too. The faith moving from materialism to spiritualism, from gross to subtle, from limitation to vastness, from atom to the universe, is a superior cultural spirit. It introduces the cultural values traditionally followed from generation to generation. It also inspires to investigate the meaning of the values. It has the same destination or the beginning point however can have different approach roads. Despite several ways, the inquisitiveness towards present continuously exists.

People think that faith and devoutness are the same. It is not so. Devoutness is the internal acceptance of the external whereas faith is the external behavioural expression of the internal acceptance. Faith is thus more exhaustive. It is this faith that becomes value of life and appears in general behaviour of a person.

Today our faiths are being encroached from all sides. Our spirituality

is directly attacked by the materialists, individualists and the extremists. Our culture is at stake. Our symbols of honour are being desecrated, Cows are being slaughtered before our eyes. Chastity of mothers and sisters is not safe. In such an adverse situation, if we do not wake up but remain indifferent to our responsibility of protecting the society and the religion, then who will save the country, religion and the culture? Enemies of our religion are the rulers of country. Silently watching their atrocities is like inviting the death ourselves.

Shrimath has assumed this as a national responsibility of granting protection. In order to organise people, Shrimath has sent our enlightened saints to various parts of the country. The coverage for protection which this math has extended needs to be continually strengthened. The society needs to be kept united with our religion and culture. You will have to shoulder this responsibility. Along with the religious spiritual awareness, patriotism too has to be encouraged. It will be your duty to continue the projects commenced by the math for organising the people. The state administration has become so weak, powerless and divided that they are unable to face the extremists and selfish tyrants. It has knelt before them. It is therefore the responsibility of the saints that they should proclaim a revolution and strongly connect the courage of the people with their faiths, so that they will not disintegrate. A revolution of the disciples can only save the country, society and the culture, they will not fall prey to fear, of the cruel brutes. If saints are firm with social religion, the society will no doubt be steadfast with the religion. You are all with sound conscience. You are visiting Shrimath since many years and are also part of the revolutionary policies and schemes of the math. What else do I have to say?" Saying 'Jay Siyaram', Swamiji concluded the discourse.

Today, there were no victory slogans. All were lost in deep thought. Acharya Anantananda led Swamiji inside.

Sixth day of the eight-day schedule dawned. Sages, saints, ascetics, persons who had sacrificed, brahmacharis and other dedicated people thronged the hall and had taken their seats with keen interest to listen to Swamiji. The sound of conch from inside brought zeal to the audience. Sursuranand was chanting Rama Nama in his sweet voice and with passion. As Swamiji kept his foot in the pandal, Ram-dhun (melodious tunes) receded and all stood up in reverence. The number of women devotes were increasing every day. The arrangements for sitting the men-folk were supervised by Sant Bhavanand, Sukhanand and Yoganand.

In the discourse, Swamiji took the subject of co-ordination from various angles and said, "We see that faith in the God has increased. We see that those who were being treated by the higher society as untouchables or insignificant; are now having a deep sentiment with resoluteness to die for religion. They are now seen in the forefront to celebrate cultural rites, events and festivals. You are aware that Shrimath has given up its single-ended form and adopted multiple form to organise people in the interest of society. The responsibility that has been carried out by the Shrimath itself has become a milestone in history. These smaller castes too have their own saints, who need knowledgeable gurus. Today, unfortunately the pundits of higher class, Vipras, Dwijas and Purohits are not prepared to guide them. They are worried about their images, their temples. They are not worried about the society or the nation. They are blind with the pride of their so called superiority. Neither are they worried for the soil of their birth nor for the downtrodden weaker section. We must come out of the inhuman divisions of castes and creeds and embrace the humanitarian view. Shrimath, in giving up discarded customs, have granted sainthood to women too. Shrimath is such worshipping centre where there is no discrimination between castes or gender. Gates of devotion are open for every one. No work is inferior. This universe itself is work oriented. The world is based on the foundation of work. Sainthood does not mean renouncing the work. You must behold the Lord in your work. Every work is the work of the Lord. We work for Him only, at His order only. Work is never an obstacle in your liberation. If you perform your duty surrendering to the Lord, the Lord himself will accomplish your work. Our enlightened saints were aware of this. God wishes to get very important work done through you. Saints only will become the guards of this nation. It is time to organise people. The Lord has given you the responsibility to build a powerful society on the foundation of faith. Saints alone can save the sinking boat of this nation and bring it safely to the banks of culture. Faith will take control of this sinking boat. There is no easier process available in any religions of the universe, than the one of present this body has given you for emancipation. There is no need to go to the cave of the Himalayas nor to perform any expensive rituals. Keep performing your duty, keep chanting the holy name. Completing the work, go to some quiet place and sit for meditation. Get absorved, it will directly take you to the fourth door. No need of any apparatus, or any special ritual. The only necessity is that of accepting any enlightened person in the form of Guru." Saying this, Swamiji completed his discourse. He uttered the name 'Siyaram'

and went into silence. Today's advice had opened the eyes of the audience. Every word went deep into their heart. Anantananda took Swamiji to the cave.

On the seventh day, Swamiji immediately took further the half discussed subject of Guru's glory. "Guru means the person who takes one from darkness to light, and only that person can do so who is capable and competent person having attained the state of oneness with the divine light or has seen and identified the light and is well familiar with the way of the light. Flame is denial of darkness. Entire world is lit with the divine flame. The sun and the moon are illuminated from it, the fire is its form. Where there is no flame there is no thought on flame and there will be darkness. And where there is no thought of concentrating on the Supreme Soul, no desire to behold the divine soul, it is bound to be in darkness. Where there is a materialistic approach, where there is life only to get the desires satisfied, where the six evils are befriended, there is no divine higher world, nor even the present world. It gives rise only to violence, anarchy, hatred, disputes, quarrels and chaos. It generates kidnaps, rapes, stealing, dacoitys, smuggling, and terrorism. Peace is essential for development and prosperity of society and peace is possible only by following the sacred principles of religion, and ethics. It is possible when the humanitarian values are up held in side and practice. Love for the soul is its foundation. Its pillars are truth, non-violence, non-stealing, renunciation and chastity. Passion, anger, greed, temptation, pride, envy are the inhuman vices. They are enemies of peaceful life. Those who are becoming gurus must stay away from these vices. They must live an ideal life. None who does not live an ideal life can grant good life to others. The word guru was being applied only for the spiritual persons. It was later that it came to be used for teachers and professors. No doubt the word earlier had its superiority, esteem and glory authentic, but the later usage has brought it a stigma. The word has been insulted. Element of faith, pride has been diminished.

In fact the society always needs gurus. Many of you have acquired the competency to become gurus. You have to learn the wisdom of Vedanta and become profound exponents. Do you remember that the devious Kapalikas and Avadhuta groups, had forcibly entered Shrimath advancing the alluring females ahead. One must have yogic power to deal with such situations too. One must therefore equip oneself with the knowledge of the processes to defeat such evil elements. The time ahead is very perilous,

hard and evil. It will not be easier to debate with talkative scholars. You have witnessed that many renowned pundits, extremists and fanatics entangled in sciences have come to Shrimath to get their doubts and confusions clarified. If you are not yourself the master of the sciences as well as the mysterious elements, how will you establish your superiority as guru?

May the Lord give you pure conscience, divine power, healthy and long life. Remember that you have to shoulder the responsibility to lead the society in the religious, spiritual , ethical fundamentals. You are affiliated with this math for a noble cause. This math has recognised your power and honoured you. Shrimath might appear to be different than others. There are no decorations nor great spectacles. It is just an abode of pure mind, courage and boldness to tell the truth with confidence and fearlessness. Here is the pure love for God, intense longing to meet the Lord and also the meditation by chanting Lord's name. You have seen the end result. Do meditation with dedication and faith. You improve your future and also that of the society. Become ideal teachers. This is what I wish to say." Acharya Anantananda then led Swamiji back to his cave.

The audience were gazing at one another in wonder. They were not talking. Only their eyes were speaking. Swamiji had presented an extract of the method of meditation and given a message for the disciples to decide about their future and to build a good society. Everybody was introspecing about their duties. Everyone had a feeling of satisfaction, as if nothing more remains to be heard.

It was the last day of the programme. Everything was being organised with due rituals. Today's yajna had a special significance. There was separate arrangement in the front yard. The renowned priest had been invited for the same. Holy fragrant rice was offered into the fire and sacrificial chanting of the sacred six-lettered mantra was continuous. The sound of the mantras charged the atmosphere with divine and sanctity. Significantly, Swamiji was present to give blessings in every programme. When the audience was deeply immersed in the utterance of the mantra, Swamiji came silently and stood there with his right hand raised in blessing the persons doing the yajna. The vibrant spiritual energy that emanated from his hand was flowing towards the performance. People saw a spectacle that Gurudev was standing in the midst of the flaring flames from the yajna. Seeing this spectacle, the fortunate disciples who derived the experience of the divine joy kept sensing through their veins that Gurudev,

who is the incarnation of Rama, himself was Brahman.

In the afternoon, Swamiji appeared for the discourse. All the senior saints were walking behind Swamiji, amongst them was Saint Padmavati too. Their heads were lowered, everybody's expression bore a shade of sadness. Acharya Anantananda was walking ahead of Swamiji, however he too was looking sad. Swamiji was in his natural self, showing neither affection nor hatred, neither happiness nor sorrow. Seeing Swamiji approaching, Saint Sursuranand concluded his chanting of Rama nama and stood below the stage. Swamiji came and raised his hand in blessing and giving them all his divine appearance. An unusual over the devotees. This time too they experienced the radiation that they had experienced in the morning during yajna. They got themselves immersed in the ocean of happiness. As Swamiji uttered the Rama Namaa, the devotees made their spine erect and got ready to listen the discourse with attention. Swamiji said -

"Brahman is devoid of any qualities. Sat, Chitta and Anand (Truth, Mind and Bliss) are dwelling in Brahman eternally. The living being is always anxious eager to attain that bliss, however illusion creates enticements and influences our organs in not allowing it to look into the self. It does not allow the mind to look at the internal joy and the entirety. Mind is not a fully spiritual element, hence it is of material nature, matter. It is therefore constant meditation which is required to convert its external pace and orient the same upward and inward. Attending discourses in the company of seekers of happiness, devotees and singing religious songs of praises of the Lord help one to remain on the right path.

The entire universe is made of atoms. Each atom consists of three qualities which have been segregated and defined by the ancient sciences as Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. When the supreme power touches and enlivens matter, these three qualities get activated and start functioning. The cause is the eternal cycle of creation, sustenance and dissolution. This tri-quality power is called Maya - the great illusion. It is absolutely material and is capable to entice the material mind and tie it with its strings of attraction. When an advice to attain a state devoid of the qualities or devoid of the illusion is given, it means that one should get freed from this illusion which is made up of these three atomic qualities. A living being qualifies himself to meet the Supreme Soul only when it cuts the ties which this illusion controls. Renunciation is therefore the first step of spiritual enlightenment. Company of devotees and the discourses as well as

devotional songs are therefore necessary to turn one towards right direction. It is at this juncture that the guru plays a significant role. Illusions are under the full control of the guru. Illusions are powerless to entice them. Mantra bestowed by the guru comprises of that flow of forceful power which takes charge of the disciple and directs the external pace of his mind to turn inward. This is the glory of the guru. The guru is not only a power which introduces one to the Supreme Soul but he himself is the Supreme Power. The guru is the second step towards spirituality. What remains is the love. The passion of a beloved, intense desire to meet, pure liging for union leads one to attain liberation. Man will become God. Word is called Brahman. The words woven in mantra do not simply remain words but the Brahman Itself. Words are immortal, their orientation is upwards. The word has the potential of being the cause. Therefore never disrespect words woven with mantra. Never raise doubt about its limitless and tremendous power in your mind.

You have opted for renunciation. You are determined to attain spirituality. You have gained the power of mantra. Many of you have reached your destination and many are on the way. My appeal to you is, respect that relation, do not cut your legs and leave the society handicapped. Your salvation and welfare of the society lies in your hands. This is the glory and proper respect to Shrimath.

Tomorrow is Ramanavami. I shall proceed towards Ayodhya. I shall go alone. You all will take your place, walk on the blissful road of liberation and give serene and joyous life to the people.

Nobody ever returns from that ultimate abode. Perhaps I may not return, but do not get disheartened. Keep up and proceed with all your projects and your activities as well as your meditations and means of furtherance.

Please forgive me for my limitations. 'Jai Siyaram, Jai Siyaram, Jai Siyaram!'

End of the Swamiji's discourse set off the emotions of all who could not check their tears with the thought of Swamiji's departure from this material world. Hearts were filled with touching sentiments. No one could look into each other's eyes. Serene eternal silence, mystifying vacuum, perpetual peace pervaded the entire spare.

Acharya Anantananda accompanied Swamiji. Same super natural

expressions were glowing on Swamiji's face.

Offering of prasada* started from evening. Swamiji too came there with Acharya Anantananda. Taking his seat, Swamiji started distributing prasada with his own hands. Everybody had the desire to take prasad from the hands of Swamiji and have his blessings by touching his feet. Spontaneous proclamations of glory were echoing everywhere.

Swamiji was present through all the three sessions and distributed his spiritual gift of prasad. All were surprised to see no trace of tiredness or a sign of melancholy on his ever lit face.

Swamiji went to the hall and fully enjoyed the devotional songs of Sursuranand. He enthused all by his inner spell and made them happy.

Finally the anticipated day came, it was - Monday, Navami of the month of Chaitra in the year 1515.

After the preceding day's discourse, there was no reason to doubt the inevitable, however the profound love brought all the disciples, saints, sages and devotees to the hermitage who gathered there with a hope to witness that historic, pathetic but blissful event and to pay their homage at his feet for the last time. Everyone's gaze was fixed on the cave. All had the fervent desire in their heart to have his last vision. As the first disciple Acharya Anantananda and other senior saints arrived there, they anxiously waited for their entry into the cave.

Acharya Anantananda had fully envisaged the preordained scene. However, for satisfaction of the devotees, he parted the curtain chanting Rama - nama and entered the cave. Swamiji had disappeared with his south threaded conch. All other material, literary works, things were in its place. His footwear was also present in its proper place. Acharya Anantananda came out, showing with his right hand the sign, 'There is nothing here'. Immediately the devotees surrounded him. He could only say this much, 'Swamiji has left for divine abode in his own body.'

The news spread everywhere in the town and the entire town rushed towards Shrimath. A non-stop flow of tears were flowing from everyone's eyes. Everyone was immersed in deep bereavement. Even the 'sthithaprajnyas (those enlightened who are beyond grief or happiness), all-knowing saints too could not bear the departure of the holy saint. Everything seemed losing the balance. Trembling, the grief transformed into a sea of tears. Waves after waves shook the grief stricken hearts.

Nobody knew what to do, where to look. All directions were filled with enormous crowd, flowing tears, heartbreaking sobs. Suddenly came from the sky the echoing sound of the conch. All felt the grief departing under the spell of the blissful sound. Clouds of tears flew away, rain of tears receded. The grief itself fell into sleep.

Acharya Anantananda in consultation with the Senior Saints carried the holy footwear to the bank of Panch-Ganga river. Behind him, there was a flow of huge crowd as long as a river. Liberated saints, great exponents, sages, devotees, volunteers, brahmacharis, renounced people, householders, men, women, people of all ages, all werc anxious to witness the event. No one could stop their overwhelming desire.

Acharya Anantananda went down to the last step to immerse the footwear into the sacred water of Ganga. No sooner he placed them on the water, it turned into a stone. Seeing this miracle, Acharya Anantananda suddenly took hold of the footwear and turning to the crowd stood there in the water. He extended his hands forward towards the crowd, holding the footwears. Watching this wonderful spectacle, the crowd raised slogans of glory, 'Swamiji is immortal'. The echoing sound hit the sky. Entire environment of grief turned into joy. Taking the phenomenal transformation of the footwear as Gurudev's desire, he came back to Shrimath after completing final rituals, carrying those footwear with him.

After consultation with all, the stone footwears were kept on a wooden seat, decorated with silken cloth in the veranda for the people to view them. His wooden seat was well adorned with flowers.

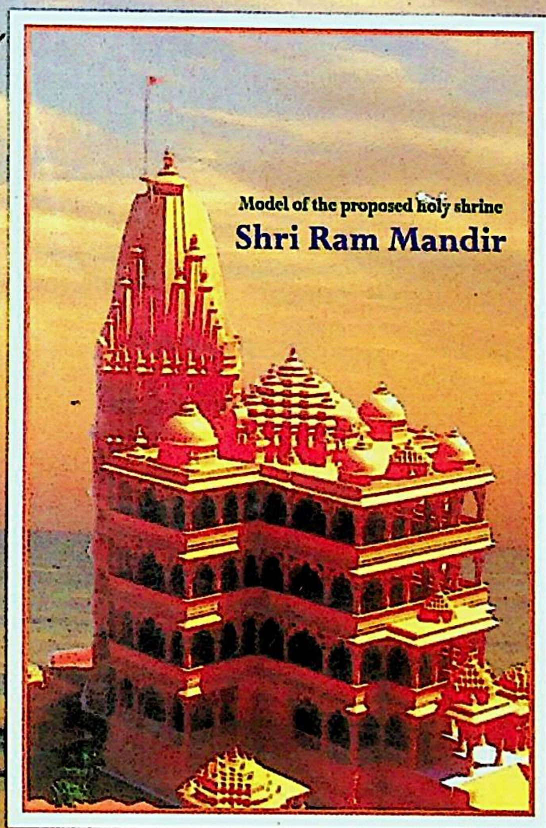
Senior saints took their seats around the holy alter. Saint Sursuranand was filling the atmosphere with serenity by his Rama Nama soaked in devotion. The crowd present there paid their homage one after another. The spectacle was pathetic, and deep compassion permeated over the scene.

All the rituals were well performed according to the tradition of Vishishthadwaithis.

At the proper time, a pedestal was installed in the cave and the footwears were installed on it. A big feast was organised. No space was left even on the roads. Whole country appeared there to pay homage and offer their devotion and love at the holy feet of Swamiji. It was a memorable sight. Saints from distant places arrived for this finale.

All the saints later presented Acharya Anantananda with a shawl as per the tradition of their sect, and coroneted him as the next authority of Shrimath.





Shri Math of Kashi is constructing a huge holy Rama Mandir on the banks of the holy
r Ganga at Haridwar to be consecrated as a pious place of worship and auspicious
ers, not of tourism, with the aid of the donors throughout the world. It will contain the
tum Sanctorum, Bhandar, Shayan Mandir, Snana Mandir and Vastu Sangraha Mandir
wed by a Park and a Pond. Covered Area 193 × 105 Ft. height 175 ft. with pillars and
hars.

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